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Labor, Pleasure, and Possession in Transnational Black Performance

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In Theater and Performance Studies

by

Anndretta Lyle Wilson

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Labor, Pleasure, and Possession

in Transnational Black Performance

by

Anndretta Lyle Wilson

Doctor of Philosophy in Theater and Performance Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Robin Davis Gibran Kelley, Co-Chair

Professor Sean Aaron Metzger, Co-Chair

The study traces histories of African descended sacred music singers and musicians whose work has relied on transatlantic or transnational travel and theorizes performance labor through modes of pleasure and possession. Twentieth century United States examples are drawn from early musical recordings from 1909, concerts from the 1930s, through dramatic literature and theaters including Broadway stages from the 1950s, to internationally popular film and music video renderings of gospel performance through the 1990s. The study concludes with an ethnographic analysis of contemporary francophone African and French African performances in Paris, France that include oral storytelling and “Black American” gospel concerts.

The dissertation of Anndretta Lyle Wilson is approved.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction

Labor Legacy

Reminiscent of Zora Neal Huston's character who understood a "nigger woman" to be the "mule" of the world, gospel music can be understood as the "mule" for much of popular music circulating globally. Performances that either employ background vocalists to sing in a reformed gospel music tradition ("and the colored girls sing… shoop"), or rely on the genre to support or serve popular music without cultural attribution (e.g. Sam Smith and others relying on gospel choirs for affect), are so common within American made and American influenced popular culture that one could easily overlook the gendered and race specific labor practices that led to its standardization. The sacred music of African descended US Americans, including spirituals and gospel musics, have circulated transnationally as *service music* for over a century. The practice began with the Fisk Jubilee Singers who toured internationally in the 1870s raising money for their university, and versions of such service continued through the contemporary function of anonymous or faceless background singers or choirs rendering gospel music aesthetics. In their histories of Black music, scholars and music critics alike have often replicated this type of subordination, which is evidenced by facelessness or namelessness, by attributing influence to "The Black church" without bothering to name specific contributors. This project amplifies singers and musicians who contributed to Black musical performance history and culture by traversing sacred, commercial, and national spaces. The current study prioritizes the under-theorized musical, cultural, and commercial histories that are the products of lived experiences for African descended women and feminized performers. The study also prioritizes the efforts of such performers to counteract demands for musical servitude and subordination.

Organized into four chapters, the dissertation offers critical analysis through historical flash points, rather than a comprehensive history. The study considers overlapping conditions of poverty and precarity, defined here as recurring economic uncertainty and diminished life chances, associated with racialized service labor including domestic work, as well as religious labor, and musical performance work. I trace performance modes of African descended sacred music singers and musicians with womanist examples from the 1930s in United States churches and concerts, through dramatic literature and theaters including Broadway stages from the 1950s, to internationally popular film and music video renderings of gospel performance through the 1990s. The study concludes with an ethnographic analysis of contemporary francophone African and French African produced music-centered performances in Paris including "Black American" gospel concerts.

Terms and Definitions

Gospel music sometimes acts like a trickster. The sound character that consumers now widely recognize transnationally as gospel music is a range of forms that has at different times and as different personas been known as slave songs, work songs, sorrow songs, lining-out, bearing-up, congregational songs, call-and-response, spirituals, neo-spirituals, pseudo-spirituals, hymns, gospel-blues, rhythm and blues, and blues. This music associated with both African American vernacular folk practices as well as Christian worship practices can persuade listeners of one meaning while performances simultaneously constitute another. Gospel music performance offers many examples where the structure of forms, the arrangement of human relations within performances, the social history informing performances, and the performance content itself all convey levels of indifference for the listeners, spectators and those seeking to interpret its meaning. Like a trickster laughing to herself at a befuddled listener, certain gospel

music performances are oriented toward pleasure among the performers themselves at the expense of listeners who may not fully be aware of meanings and codes.[1]

It is difficult to define gospel music or trace an exact genealogy because the designation "gospel song" appeared as early as 1905 in the *Methodist Review* referencing songs published for white congregations.[2] However, in an account published in 1903, W.E.B. Dubois made note that the term "gospel song" was being used, and he situates the term in conjunction with "the frenzy of a Negro revival in the untouched backwoods of the South" that he had witnessed. After the term had circulated for at least half a century among African descended practitioners to indicate high spirited performance, it started to become a recording and publishing industry genre category for religious "race music" in the 1950s to replace the "spirituals" category. As a commercial genre, the category "gospel music" imposed contested boundaries around sounds rooted in historical African and African American folk practices as well as hybrid European religious practices. Still, consumers and practitioners embrace the seemingly anachronistic term to reference both current and historical sacred music practices by African Americans.

This study continues to use gospel music as a pan-aural designation for an array of African American music styles, which have been and are developed through Black church practice spaces, that incorporate song, dance, preaching, various vocables, clapping, and stomping, with the uses of instruments (formal and informal) as well as other uses of the body to

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[1] Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 55.

[2] "ART. II.--THE NEW METHODIST HYMNAL--THE MUSIC." The Methodist Review (1885-1931) 09 1905: 697. ProQuest. Web. 14 Feb. 2014 .

make noise.[3] Examples and discussion will examine distinct practices, functions, and forms that have more specific labels that reflect era, region, doctrinal, and social relations. This definition includes Ring Shout practices with fluid associations to both sacred and secular forms. The term "gospel music" often functions in vernacular speech as an umbrella term for many distinct sacred music styles including "spirituals" practiced as early as the 1800s. In addition, gospel music is used to indicate a delivery style apart from lyrical content or the original form of any song. Performers can "gospelize" any song or "take it to church" through tonal and embodied improvisational vocabularies. In this way, I emphasize the practice spaces through which the music first emerged as the method for qualifying gospel music.

Concerning ethnicity and race for people of African descent, this study employs language with close attention to era-specific, locality specific, and self-determined nomenclature. Against colonial naming practices that refuse to recognize how peoples have chosen to identify themselves, this study acknowledges the preferred proper nouns that have emerged from within ethnic and pan-ethnic groups collectively or by key figures widely accepted as group leaders who have offered or repeatedly used terms for group identity during a given era. For example, I use the pan-ethnic term Negro when discussing people in or from the US through the Civil rights era, and I use the pan-ethnic term Black as proper noun (capitalized) when referring to African descended people in or from the Americas after the Civil Rights era.[4] When discussing issues of skin color or phenotype independent of a person's chosen or family identity, I use the term black-bodied to indicate the collapse or disregard of social and cultural specificity for people

[3] Informal instruments include washboards played with spoons to function as percussion.

[4] I avoid blanket usage of the term African-American because it has been widely contested by African descended people in the US with Caribbean genealogies who prefer to be identified as West Indian.

with dark skin. In addition, this study avoids assumption that terms used surrounding pan-ethnic and racial identity in American English are adequately translated by the literal equivalent in French and the usage of the terms negre', *Negre'*, *noir*, *Noir, and Afro-Americaine* in this study are specific to the context of each event.[5]

In harmony with Alice Walker's poetic reasoning for who qualifies as a *womanist,* I use the term to signify women who incorporate faith practices and Black aesthetics in their feminist approaches to life and work. Walker suggests that a womanist is a type of feminist who incorporates vernacular and folk aesthetics as well as non-rational practices toward the gernetion of new thought and experience. The term is often preferred among Black women scholars in the disciplines of religious studies and theology to claim space for academic work inclusive of faith and artistic practice. Walker explicates the traits of a womanist to include "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior" by one who is, or acts, "responsible" and "in charge".[6] In addition, I interpret her notion of a womanist "wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one" to mean that a womanist has an intellectual curiosity that extends beyond what others presume to be her intellectual and social capacity. In this way, the term is especially fitting for women who work from within traditions and institutions that might be historically misogynist yet rooted in traditions and practices of healing and faith. The second part of the definition explicates the characteristics of a womanist in terms of who and how she loves: music, dance, the moon, the Spirit, love, food, roundness, struggle, Folk, and herself. Multiple elements of Walker's two-part definition will permeate my entire discussion of

[5] For more discussion on the numerous translation possibilities see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora : Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[6] Alice Walker, "Womanist," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2012).

Carroll and her work, but my emphasis here is the notion that a womanist is a woman of color who is "responsible" and "in charge," toward the understanding that this leadership quality, understood to be just as intrinsic to womanhood as it is presumed for manhood, challenges notions of femininity and subordination present in the Nativity Scene exemplified in Mary.

Interpreting Meaning and History

The slipperiness of gospel music has resulted in conflicting interpretations of its history, and opposing interpretations of it meaning and significance. The critical analysis of gospel music is complicated by the fact that the practices and a cultural hierarchy often associated with the labels "gospel hymns," "gospel songs," and "spirituals" are not stable or fixed but terms that changed with passing generations. My dissertation borrows and departs from Gates' framework in *Signifyin' Monkey* to explore trickster qualities and characteristics as African American vernacular "doings" that sometimes find themselves manifested as embodied gospel song performance. Floyd and Ramsey emphasize the "repetition and difference"[7] attributes of Signifyin' throughout a broad scope of instrumental black music recordings across numerous genres providing conspicuous examples. Alternatively, my work focuses on embodied religious performance encompassing music, dance and preaching that yield what Gates labels "indeterminacy," common in certain double-voiced cultural expressions.[8] That is to say, this project considers obscure meanings that are artfully proffered through trickster-like gospel music performances.

[7] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*.

[8] Ibid.

A primary example of such indeterminacy surrounds the label "spirituals" that is now commonly applied to music in the style made famous by the Fisk Jubilee singers. It is common for "spirituals" to conduct? the association of choral singing arranged with European-based music notation and some lyrics referencing slave experiences. Notwithstanding this assemblage, that same term was at one point used to indicate songs that might have been derived from fragments of hymns or completely composed through improvisation and performed during ecstatic church services or as work songs. In the early twentieth century Zora Neale Hurston described vernacular performances of these types of spirituals that were only available through oral traditions without written music notation.

An early account of a scene that would have been induced by the type of spirituals of which Hurston wrote took place in a New Orleans church between 1853-1861. An architect visiting from New England described a "perfectly black" woman in a church:

"clapping her hands… shouting and dancing, her head thrown back and rolling from one side to the other. Gradually her shout became indistinct, she threw her arms wildly about instead of clapping her hands, fell back into the arms of her companions, then threw herself forward and embraced those before her, then tossed herself from side to side, gasping, and finally sunk to the floor, where she remained at the end of the song"[9]

The type of song most likely to have inspired and encouraged the bodily movement and dancing just described was a Negro spiritual with a "beat" and danceable rhythm. Despite this tradition of religious practice in conjunction with folk spirituals, by the early 1900s the term would later come to signify only songs that were refined into a more classical form and divorced

[9] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion : The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, Updated ed. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

from dance and bodily movement. To complicate things further, by the 1940s that same term was using to indicate "sacred swing" music popularized by Rosetta Tharpe, and, for a while, all religious "race music" had the "spirituals" designation in music industry trade publications.

An example of how difficult it has been to assign defitionion and meaning to spirituals can be found among Paul Gilroy's arguments in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Gilroy seemed to misinterpret that Zora Neal Hurston was arguing for "authentic" Blackness when she tried to clarify distinct versions of the form toward distinct functions. [10] Hurston recognized he confusion surrounding the term "spirituals" because it is a homonym. This one word with (at least) two meanings and distinct contexts could mean either; a work performed by classically trained voices singing harmonies based on a heptatonic scale performing a pre-composed text without movement on a stage facing quiet listeners in a concert hall setting, or an improvised song that resisted a western musical scale with no formal audience as all participants danced or "shouted" in a circle outdoors or in church. Zora Neale Hurston tried to clarify this distinction through her anthropological research most likely collected in the early twenties, by calling the more popular version "neo-spirituals," Hurston's insistence on different language to describe departures in form ad function was once way the might have been trying to avoid the erasure of folk practices that did not fit into the Fisk Jubilee narrative of refined presentation. Sadly, Hurston's research attempt to introduce a new term could not prevent several decades of misunderstanding including Gilroy's uniformed critique of Hurston and the continued exclusion of certain denigrated religious practices from major literature on Black music and cultural expression.

[10] Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness," (1993).

Contrasting Gilroy, both Samuel Floyd in *Power of Black Music* and Eileen Southern in *The Music of Black Americans* acknowledge the distinction between two meanings that "spirituals" can have, and both share accounts of the Ring Shout practice as late as 1926 associating the "invisible church" with the tradition.[11] The word "shout"[12] is also a homonym and can mean to yell or cry loud, but in the context of Ring Shout, the word shout means "to dance," or sometimes more specifically to do a "holy" dance.[13] The double meanings of the words "spirituals" and "shout" supply a basic linguistic example of how meanings through certain double voiced gospel music performances evade or obscure interpretation.[14]

Samuel Floyd's work linking Signifyin' to Ring Shout traditions in *The Power of Black Music* (1995) is further developed in Gutherie Ramsey's *Race Music* (2003), and both works employ Signifyin' to explore the social and political contexts of Black music through several historical periods. Floyd built upon Sterling Stuckey's work in *Slave Culture* to conclude that "African musical traditions survived the Middle Passage," and the Ring Shout tradition is the

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

[12] Ibid.

[13] For a relevant performance and narrative about the distinction between shouters and non-shouters, see/hear Rev. Shirley Ceaser's song called "Shouting John" at a concert sponsored by McDonald's in the late 80's. Notice her first words in this particular clip are: "I want to shout all through here." This clip is also an example of what I term "staged indifference" and there is so much to say about female preachers, female masculinity, male femininity, and the references to Black farmers and sharecroppers versus the Black professional class (which includes preachers in some contexts). I will have to save that discussion for another time. http://youtu.be/sHpSM0PXuAE

[14] To complicate matters further, Methodists of European decent sang their own versions of "spirituals" during camp meetings and is plausible that African American attendees who were being Christianized appropriated some lyrics to create negro versions.

primary example he employs to draw a connection between the numerous African cultural expressions he detailed and many African American ones that draw from the practice.[15] Most accounts of Ring Shout practices include a circle of people moving in the counter-clockwise direction dancing, and making vocal and percussive noises with their bodies, sometimes slow in pace initially, then building to a crescendo of sound and movement.[16] In addition to Stuckey's evidence, Floyd conveys through the many sources he cites that Ring Shout practices were both sacred and secular because spirituality and corresponding beliefs permeated all aspects of daily life.[17] The dexterity of gospel musicians and gospel music as a genre can be attributed in part to its complicated history of Black worship practices, and this history helps to explain why there are many variations of the song style called "spirituals."

While Floyd presents accounts of the Ring Shout to demonstrate a connection to Africa for the development of Jazz, Blues and other secular musics of the twentieth century, some examples seem to contradict another claim he makes. Floyd suggests that secular practices including Signifying expanded at the turn of the twentieth century because religious practices were no longer useful to modern subjects. He borrows Houston Baker's theory of reforming, which suggests that W.E.B. Dubois reformed religious expression for a modern agenda.[18] Floyd however contradicts his own claim that, "Flourishing since the 1890s, Holiness churches contributed the Pentecostal fervor of holy dances, hand clapping, foot patting, and the use of

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[15] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music : Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*.

[16] Ibid., 37.

[17] Ibid., 15.

[18] Ibid., 65.

instruments such as drums, cymbals, tambourines, triangles, and guitars"[19] and Floyd mistakenly concludes that the use of Ring Shout in religious expression ceased at the turn of the twentieth century. Floyd's conclusions are understandable given the archival absence of denigrated religious practices that shift in the early 20th century toward more "refined" expressions for the New Negro.[20] While researchers including E. Franklin Frazier among others present compelling data that membership within Black church institutions and denominations including those called "Sanctified" or "Pentecostal"[21] expanded rapidly at the turn of the century there is in fact clear evidence that formal worship practices in some Black church institutions shifted far away from Ring Shout and related traditions. One example is the African Methodist Episcopal **(**AME) church which was founded in Philadelphia in 1805 (incorporated in 1813) and began the institutional repudiation of Ring Shout practices at least as early as 1818 with the regulation of singing styles published in the preface of their third official hymnal.[22]

Despite prevailing images celebrating American Black Gospel choirs clapping, dancing, and shouting, historical evidence does not support this popular image for organized religious expression by those of African decent in the U.S. prior to the 1930s. It is convenient to collapse all of Black religious expression into the image of the jubilant Gospel choir, but for most of U.S.

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[19] Houston A. Baker, *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1996); Floyd, *The Power of Black Music : Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*.

[20] Alain Locke, "The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance," *New York: Simon & Shuster* (1997).

[21] See E. Franklin Frazier and Charles Eric Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America* (Schocken Books New York, 1974); Floyd, *The Power of Black Music : Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*, 63.

[22] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (WW Norton & Company, 1997), 81.

history in both northern and southern states, evidence reveals several centuries of people of African decent participating in European styled worship practices as both marginalized church attendees and documented members, as both freed persons and legal slaves.[23] To be clear, early black churchgoer experiences before 1900 were mostly in Episcopal, Methodist, Congregational, and Catholic churches with exclusively European worship practices.[24]

Eileen Southern in *The Music of Black Americans: A History* describes evidence of churches in Washington D.C. and Philadelphia presenting sacred music concerts with orchestras and classically trained choruses as early as the 1840s.[25] Similar events are advertised in African American newspapers for the next century, and, by the early 1900s, there are dozens every month in major areas like Baltimore, D.C. And Philadelphia. Missing from this newspaper archive, however, is the invisible institution that practiced Ring Shout, the practice Floyd heralded as the keeper and conduit of African and African American culture through and beyond the Middle passage up to the Negro Renaissance.[26] Floyd suggests - contradicting his own evidence - that the importance of Ring Shout practices ceased to exist in religious contexts just as secular versions emerged in Jazz and the Blues.[27] Floyd goes on to claim, mistakenly, based on his analysis of sound recordings and published sheet music, that later in the twentieth century ring shout practices in gospel music performances were "revived" by secular music, and he

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[23] Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color : The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

[24] Frazier and Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America*.

[25] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*.

[26] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music : Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*, 10.

[27] Ibid., 78.

positions Blues and Jazz and the ancestors of the music we now call gospel.[28] Because the folk practices documented as "Ring Shout" expressions that continued into the twentieth century were not widely documented and not widely consumed commercially, Floyd's reliance on the commercial archive might have inhibited his recognition of folk practices including gospel music.

While I agree with Floyd's important conclusion that Ring Shout practices permeate jazz and blues performance modes, I maintain that the invisible institution employing Ring Shout in religious practices did not suddenly cease to exist during the Negro Renaissance. Some of the same evidence Floyd uses to confirm Ring Shout practices in churches in the thirties is indeed evidence that the invisible institution did not vanish at the turn of the century. It seems that Floyd, in his efforts to present African Americans as modern subjects, erases religious Ring Shout practices from the narrative of Black music beyond "the 1890s" so that singers and musicians can more easily fit the enlightened and rational profile of modern subjects sans religious conviction that is non-rational. He explains that the modernist sensibility required the rejection of past values and "a repudiation of the cosmic vision of African culture and cultural memory" because those "trappings" were not acceptable to modernists.[29] My project takes note of this repudiation of culture and the practitioners and culture-keepers who were indifferent to the secular confines of modernity.

Important to my own analysis is how the lack of distinction between sacred and secular—that, according to Stuckey and Floyd, recurs in various African traditions all over the continent would carry over into many African American musical practices including the Ring Shout. The

[28] Ibid., 129, 268.

[29] Ibid., 88.

Ring Shout, with many accounts given in the context of a religious practice after church or during church services, continued to resist more Platonic or Puritan binaries separating the body from the mind, carnal from cerebral, and pleasure from piety, even while embracing Western Christian religions. It seems however that, when writing "After the Love Has Gone: Bio-Politics and Etho-Poetics in the Black Public Sphere,"[30] Paul Gilroy did not account for the significance of this more African approach to western Christianity that allows for in-the-body religious experience. Without examining actual practices, Gilroy misapplies notions "suggested by Christianity"[31] and generalizes that "in post-slave cultures where bodily and spiritual freedoms were sharply differentiated and freedom was more likely to be associated with death than life."[32] In fact, many African American and Europe-based religious practices have historically looked to the human body itself as the vessel and conduit of Godliness, as evidenced by the expressed purpose of the Ring Shout. With close attention to issues of gender, locality, and social distinction, my research seeks to interrogate why and how certain denigrated religious and musical practices were frequently omitted from New Negro literature and subsequently neglected in significant critical scholarship.

In terms of how sacred music has functioned, Houston Baker has argued, it is a sign of modernism that the form of Spirituals is not detached from its content, and is mutable and interactive so that content and form *in*form each other and often become each other. Baker writes in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* that his concept of "form" is not fixed in a way that

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[30] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race : Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 194.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 185.

is distinct from content and he rejects the notion of form “as an abiding and stabilizing presence." Instead, he presents from as that which has “the force of a designated space… between traditionally formulated dichotomies of self and other.” For Baker, form is not a permanent or defined structure, but a “trope or poetic image." I take this to mean the aesthetic and performative space between the sound of “sorrow songs” and the content of songs, which have historically referenced suffered, death, dying with meanings that hopefully anticipate the afterlife, transcendence, or justice on earth. Since Baker was writing in the instance about Negro spirituals as WEB DuBois imagined them in his work, Baker is most likely imagining the sound of slow and sustained resistance rather than ecstatic embodiment. Considering this context, the imagined slowness of form is often inextricable from the sad content, but there is also room for interpretation of such songs beyond the proffered lyrical meaning.

Departing from Baker’s suggestion that the content and form “become each other,” this study is concerned with the way that the bodies of performers convey meaning that might not be present in either the sound or the words of a song. On the surface, gospel music might seem inextricable from its religious content. This was the case for music industry practices when, according to rumor, executives used the presence of the word “Jesus” in any song to qualify the song as either gospel or rhythm and blues. However, interpreting the meaning of songs based on vocal delivery and lyrical content alone is one way the embodied practices have consistently been neglected in critical analysis.

In particular, the interest here is the way in which performers, especially women, evade roles of service with their bodies even if they have inherited the form and content of service through songs and tradition. Before the singers themselves had ever traveled overseas, spirituals and gospel have long circulated transnationally as service music. Black women working as

anonymous or faceless background singers across genres are the primary vocal affect laborers supporting headlining acts across popular music and have been for several decades. Without coincidence, many singers working in the professional background circuit historically and presently have been church performers and developed their abilities in Black churches with strong vocal traditions. The wide consumption of performances that employ background vocalists is now so common across popular music that one could easily overlook the gendered and race specific practices that led to its standardization. Background singers service headliners by providing the response to every call, the harmonies to every melody, and in some cases the melody itself to fill the vocal voids where gaps in technical ability exist for headliners during both live and recorded performances. The very structure of popular performances that employ a group of background vocalists as an anonymous singing unit rather than individually identifiable co-performers might be understood as a deformed remnant of certain Black church oral and musical performance practices where choirs and congregation surround the central lead performer[33]

Additionally, this standard for popular music performance might be a residual of the practice of insisting that Black singers and musicians perform from behind a curtain to avoid being seen in segregated spaces. Still, another possible contributor to the prevalence of Black singers doing vocal service work in popular music with a longstanding connection to Black gospel music traditions is an even longer history of transnational popularity for spirituals and gospel music. The ways that background vocalists support contemporary popular music is

[33] Examples also include Black women soloists like Marion Williams, Mavis Staples, Aretha Franklin, and Whitney Houston who provided cultural reproductive labor by advancing technical standards and inspiring cycles of performers who emulate them transhistorically.

directly related to both the history of gospel music in cultural participation spaces as well as the history of its transformation and expansion to a presentational transnational performance.

Throughout the 1900s, commerce driven technologies such as phonographs, radio, television, and film demonstrate the increasing movement of African descended religious musics out of spaces of cultural participation to spaces for commercial presentation. Practices shifted from community based expressive culture to service music, across social strata and geographies with content distributed internationally. Examples include the early phonograph recordings of 1900s minstrel "coon" performances derived from Jubilee-styled spirituals - some of the earliest popular songs in recorded music history - as well as the gospel songs that Mick Jagger covered to yield his very first recording successes in the 1960s.[34] These examples reflect a larger practice of popular artists reforming and deforming African descended religious music in order to dismiss cultural context and then also *background* the forms along with the black bodies who produced the forms so that both function in service to popular music. These renditions "authored" by artists who backgrounded black bodies, and also Africanist cultural significance and context, were in many cases the most widely circulated or most popular versions of Black religious musical forms. In the process, religious musics of African descended people were represented through social and business structures with colonial approaches that often worked to feminize Black performance labor and limit Black cultural expression to a role of social and musical subservience across national and continental geographies.

The wide consumption of popular music performances that employ background vocalists trained in a gospel music tradition, or utilize gospel music and musicians in a supplemental or support role, is so common across Western popular culture that one could easily overlook the

[34] Philip Norman, *Mick Jagger* (Doubleday Canada, 2012).

transnational history of gendered and race-specific practices that led to its standardization. African descended religious music has circulated across continents as *service music* since the 1870s when the Fisk Jubilee Singers successfully toured internationally with the explicit purpose of raising money for their university toward the project of knowledge production. This study defines service music as a type of musical performance that primarily functions to support dominant forms of production without recognition for artistic merit or aesthetic value of the subordinate forms or performers independent of the purpose for which they have been required to serve. Popular culture performers and producers have repeatedly feminized gospel music so that it functions in service to popular music in a way that parallels the racialized and feminized domestic and reproductive labor of Black women in the United States historically.

African descended women working as anonymous or faceless background singers within popular music have been the primary vocal affect laborers supporting popular music headlining acts for several decades in order to secure capital, diplomacy, and expressive freedom not available to the background singers themselves. For example, the anonymous composers of the song "This Might Be the Last Time" did not realize the financial benefit of their cultural capital because Mick Jagger credited himself as the song's author after hearing the 'public domain' song on a Staple Singers recording. Such labor inequalities mark how the genre of gospel music often operates more broadly in terms of service to mainstream cultural production and how it often yields the gendered and racialized reproductive labor behind musical United States cultural imperialism. This chapter considers Black performance flash points and micro-histories, rather than a single comprehensive history, of African descended religious music circulating transnationally throughout the twentieth century. The flash points not only evidence how commerce and new technologies worked together in ways that could restrict African descended

religious performance to functions of gendered and racialized service music, but they also convey the counteractive tactics and strategies that performers enacted to challenge and neutralize such conditions through spirituals and gospel music styles. Even while spirituals and gospel music practices were reformed and "deformed"[35] to fit functions far removed from their "afrological"[36] ring-shout origins, African descended religious performers took new practices across geographies in foreign spaces, through new technologies, and emerging industry to consistently counter those conditions that might otherwise ensure subordination through their own performances.

One of the goals of my project is to reclaim a position in the narrative of African American secular music for the repudiated culture keepers giving special attention to the singers and musicians, many female, who toured across the country. These often impoverished folks sometimes traveled in groups or with families as evangelists and preachers preserving Ring Shout performance repertoires. These performers and religious leaders were commonly described (often with condescension) as "Sanctified," "Holiness" and "Pentecostal" and often used music and dance as catalysts for the conversion of African American migrants between the turn of the century and the 1940's. The sudden disappearance from Floyd's analysis of this religious practice, which by some accounts was led primarily by women, could be evidence of Tricia Rose's comment in *Black Noise* that, "a great deal of the history of black cultural practices has been disproportionately explored via male subjects" and "that inadvertently contributes to a contemporary analysis that further marginalizes women producers" in a male-centered

[35] Baker, Houston A. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. University of Chicago Press, 1989.

[36] Lewis, George E. "Improvised music after 1950: Afrological and eurological perspectives." *Black Music Research Journal* (2002): 215-246.

scholarship.[37] This might especially be the case for women who were most likely uneducated, poor, considered "social liabilities"[38] and unaffiliated with the race leaders who determined the boundaries of New Negro culture.[39]

Some of these indifferent women performers are presented in the work of Cheryl J. Sanders in *Saints in exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal experience in African American religion and culture* (1999), by Meharry H. Lewis in *Mary Lena Lewis Tate - a Street Called Straight: The Ten Most Dynamic and Productive Black Female Holiness Preachers* (2002), by Jerma Jackson in *Singing in my soul: black gospel music in a secular age* (2004), by Anthea D. Bulter in *Women in the Church of God in Christ: making a sanctified world* (2007), by Gayle Wald in *Shout, sister, shout!: the untold story of rock-and-roll trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe* (2007), by Deidre Helen Crumbley in *Saved and Sanctified: The Rise of a Storefront Church in Great Migration Philadelphia* (2012), and by Timothy Dodge in *The School of Arizona Dranes: Gospel Music Pioneer* (2013). Together these works give insight into the leadership women maintained in Pentecostal religious traditions as well as insight into the trope of the transient "sanctified" female musician, which parallels the trope of the transient male blues musician. My goal for this project is not to offer a comprehensive history of repudiated Pentecostal performance, but I will draw from the above-mentioned texts as I theorize about the social compositions that selected

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[37] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise : Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Music/Culture (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994).

[38] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music : Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*, 268.

[39] Although Angelina Grimke, a mixed-race woman, contributed to the Negro Renaissance, I will discuss in subsequent sections how her contributions aligned with Locke's standards for refined taste.

performers produced and to which they were oriented while turning away from the more "modern" social contexts as a demonstration of indifference.

Dissertation Outline

Chapter One is a critical discussion of Negro women's musical service as an extension of domestic work and as a form of "reproductive labor" through church and concert spaces between the 1930s and 1960s. A primary figure is former child domestic worker and Kennedy Center honoree Marion Williams (1927-1994). Her forty-year performance career began in Pentecostal churches where congregants embodied African retentions and performed Africanist *ring shout* traditions. She began performing with her street evangelist mother and piano teacher father in the 1930s, and her career extended to international concert halls, theaters, and festivals, including service as a US musical ambassador across Africa and Europe. I argue that social and professional precarity informed the process through which she simultaneously created meaning and pleasure through performance and conceived her own subjectivity. I interpret existing scholarship surrounding Black women's service work in the United States to suggest that occupational service identities informed musical performance for Williams and her contemporaries as well as listening practices for their mainstream audiences. The study presents examples of women, including Williams, who performed alternatives to racialized and gendered service identities. The chapter conveys how certain women singers and musicians moved away from religious service roles and normative gendered behavior, toward "unruly" Africanist and womanist performance within certain sacred music contexts.

My dissertation will consider the religious performances that precede and coincide with those of Arizona Dranes and Rosetta Tharpe who were not lauded by mainline African American churches, as a matter of taste, but influenced secular music and theater internationally through what was becoming the longest-running signifier of Blackness in popular culture: gospel music.

Dranes and Tharpe were "discovered" by recording companies in 1926 and 1939 respectively but their secular crossover appeal, international influence, and their (record label's) commercial success should not be misinterpreted as wide spread acceptance among all African American Christian communities during their lifetimes. The disjuncture between Dranes' and Tharpe's popularity with consumers and their simultaneous social repudiation as African American Pentecostal transient female musicians is an example of what happens when sounds with specific meanings and histories become "disembodied, severed from its source, (re)contextualized, and (re)embodied and appropriated,"[40] as Alex Weheliye suggests of sounds recordings in his work *Phonographies*. This project seeks to amplify both the historically denigrated subcultural conduits of gospel music manifested in popular culture, and the meanings produced when performers sing play the sounds of each.

Chapter Two offers lesser known histories of how black bodied performers during the twentieth century worked in conversation with commerce-driven technologies that helped to move gospel music and its derivatives across social spaces and geographies from *participation* practices into *presentation* modes, which are often more consistent with service work. I offer examples ranging from phonograph recordings of minstrel "Jubilee" performances of the early 1900s to the gospel songs that Mick Jagger covered to yield his first recording success in the 1960s. I explain how the recordings exemplify a long history of commercial projects that *backgrounded* Black sacred music in ways that reformed it to function as support music in service to popular culture. I also offer examples of performers who worked to keep Africanist cultural traditions in the foreground in ways that counteracted service functionality. Selected

[40] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Duke University Press, 2005).

examples of backgrounding and foregrounding come from early recordings by Fisk Jubilee Quartet in the early 1900s, the "good will" tours of the Golden Gate Quartet following White House appearances in the 1940s and the licensing of their music for distribution in Europe. Examples also include live performances by Marion Williams in Paris during the 1960s. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how gospel music practices within popular cinema have rendered notions of service as well as possibilities for pleasure and resistance surrounding gospel music through the 1990s.

In Chapter Three the study moves through theater and theatricality against masculinist authorship in a discussion of attribution beyond textual scripts and material archives, toward collective and embodies authorship. The chapter begins with an analysis of Langston Hughes' initial distaste for certain types of women gospel music performers in both his fiction and non-fiction work from 1924 through the 1950s. In conversation with existing scholarship surrounding intersectionality and masculinist constructions of race, I suggest that Hughes' writings about women and gospel music marked the gendered construction of Black folk identities common to that era. Continuing a discussion of women, theater, gospel music the discussion suggests commercial interest as a possible cause for the shift in Hughes' outlook, which led to his development of the "gospel song play" genre including the play *Black Nativity* (1961) starring Marion Williams. In a discussion of reproductive labor, I interrogate the authorship of Hughes in the case of *Black Nativity* in favor of a womanist mode of authorship that includes the women practitioners responsible for the production and its success.

Although Langston Hughes had earlier defended the "common element" whose "religion roars to a shout," he admits in a 1947 article, as a matter of taste, that he does not prefer the

screaming style of Gospel music brought into the mainstream by singers like Rosetta Tharpe.[41] In the same article Hughes also took note of how gospel artists like Tharpe were complicating genre and spatial barriers between churches and theaters with sacred/secular performances having much commercial success.[42] Although this religious tradition of women-led congregations with Ring Shout music practices was not in alignment with "New Negro" worship practices, it was clearly the basis for Langston Hughes' gospel-song-play *Tambourines to Glory*. The play is about two poor women who start an un-affiliated church and recruit members through musical and movement-filled street performance. The play was written in 1956 when the "mainline" African American denominations, like AME and CME, still did not condone or allow women pastors and many also still banned religious expression in the Ring Shout tradition.

At least as early as 1926 Langston Hughes expresses ideas concerning black cultural production and also his international interests that later manifest in theatrical form. For example Hughes writes about "the so-called common element" who he calls the "majority," that their "joy runs, bang! into ecstasy" and "their religion soars to a shout […] they are not afraid of spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child."[43] Hughes posits gospel music as the definitive Negro art form. Hughes goes on to acknowledge that even though this "folk music" had already achieved "world-wide fame," "many an upper class Negro church,

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[41] Langston Hughes, "Church, Theatre and Gospel Songs," *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967)*, 1947/07/26/ 1947.

[42] Shortly after gospel singer Tharpe started touring in Europe near the end of her life and career by 1960, Hughes would also have successful gospel theater productions touring Europe near the end of his life and career in 1964.

[43] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation* 122, no. 23 (1926).

even now, would not dream of employing a spiritual in its services"[44] because they prefer European hymns. Hughes comments on the disjuncture between local social stratifications and international popularity surrounding certain forms of gospel music.

The chapter continues with a discussion of Vinnette Carroll (1922-2002), a West Indian theater director who directed *Black Nativity*. I suggest that her interpretation (and rewriting) of Hughes' text is in conversation with the Nativity Scene, which I understand to be an archetype of gender codes based on Immaculate Conception. I explain how Carroll's version allowed space for women to be active participants in the process of conception as authors and collaborators. Through a further discussion of Carroll's work and stated philosophy surrounding the training of Black actors, the community theater she founded, and theatrical works she conceived, I suggest that her theater work more broadly was a form of reproductive labor toward identity formation. I then interpret a womanist mode of authorship between vocalist Marion Williams and director Vinnette Carroll who were active in the conception of Langston Hughes' play *Black Nativity*. Embodied knowledge as well as the embodiment of antecedent and ancestral cultural expressions already embedded in, and inextricable from, new collaborations is what constituted their womanist mode of production. I offer the term *co-conception,* rather than the widely circulated term "cocreation," as a way to refer to the process through which their ideas were developed in stages and through histories that proceed the actual collaborative performance moment. I understand such "afrological" modes of cultural production between Carroll and Williams as social practices that anticipate and exemplify the "interdependency" which would later be understood to be an ideal component of inclusive societies.

[44] Ibid.

The fourth chapter considers contemporary tourist attractions in Paris, France that draw directly from overlapping histories of gospel music, jazz performance, and Black American military and domestic service in ways that romanticize Black American subordination through music. The chapter also suggests that the real-time circulation of sounds, images, attire, conversation, food, produced by African performers and residents, can interrupt such romanticized narratives. The two types of attractions presented in the chapter are tours of Black Paris and a series of *Americaine Noir* gospel concerts. The chapter begins with an analysis of a tour of Black Paris as an oratory performance event. I assert that the oral presentation, which intertwined military and musical histories of Black US soldiers in France beginning with WWI, helped to conjure for listeners an "imagined intimacy" between government powers and the Black American music makers who they perceived as inherently ready to serve either the interests of the State or at the pleasure of paying audiences. The ultimate analysis, however, is that the presence of Africa at the end of the tour through local commerce, food, and discourse with residents, upsets the false narrative of benign negrophilia in a way that recalls histories of anti-Black violence across continents.

Connecting the two main subjects of analysis for the chapter is a discussion of how the gospel song "Oh When The Saints Go Marching In" has circulated as a jazz tune and also a competitive sports "fight song" transnationally toward the *backgrounding* of its religious and cultural specificity as Black sacred music. The chapter continues with an exploration of contemporary concerts advertised as "authentic Black American gospel" targeting English-speaking tourists and held Catholic cathedrals. I employ ethnographic research methods to interpret field notes and the interviews of black-bodied performers to suggest that respondents employ particular forms of gospel music in the construction and contestation of certain post

colonial identities. Interpreting respondents' repeated references to gospel music circulating as popular culture, namely and most frequently the film *Sister Act 2*, I theorize that Black American gospel music has often simultaneously served as the signifier for precarity and as the sonic symbol of resistance to conditions of subordination.

Chapter One

Sanctified Pleasure Spaces

Marion Williams

From her seat in the balcony Marion Williams looked down adoringly at her musical offspring as they performed in her honor. Her offspring, Aretha Franklin and Little Richard, acknowledged her influence while melding the specific sounds and movements from the Pentecostal church with the repertoire of popular music--,a development for which Williams was largely responsible. This tribute took place in 1993 during the Kennedy Center Honors ceremony. While Williams looked on, Franklin sang lead vocals in a rendition of "Packing Up," which was Williams' signature song. Franklin would have heard Williams sing the song for the first time as a young girl during the time when Franklin's father, the prominent revivalist Reverend C. L. Franklin, travelled with a touring musical crusade that often ended with Williams' climactic performance. Also during the tribute Little Richard admitted that *he* had appropriated key elements of his own signature style from Williams, including the "wooooooooooooo" that he famously sounded on the "Tuti Fruiti" record and beyond. When Franklin and Richard were joined on stage along with Beatles musician Billy Preston on organ performing the tribute to their antecedent Marion Williams, they were aided by a fifty-voice gospel choir from the local Washington D.C. area to complete the scene. Franklin also gave homage to Williams by leaving the stage, moving through the aisles, interacting with individuals in the audience, and even sharing her microphone as a nod to several of Williams' signature performance gestures. Franklin, Richard, and Preston re-performed the theatrical movements, vocal style, and dances that Williams had enacted for decades to help establish gospel performance as a genre for widespread popular consumption. Through her musical offspring, adaptations for rhythm and blues, as well as rock and roll trace back to her performances. But

Williams was more than a trend-setter who understood the commercial appeal of her labor. Her work is situated along a continuum of Black musical performers who inhabited space in ways that troubled expectations of service and subjection from Black singers and musicians.

Williams had consistently taken possession of spaces that were not marked as sacred, and she 'sanctified' them through embodied Pentecostal improvisation rituals during collaborative performances, which upset historic structures of racialized and feminized performance labor. She also claimed the space of her body for personal pleasure during the enactments of corporeal traditions that she repeated nightly and weekly for years, first as a girl soloist in Pentecostal churches, and then as she travelled across Europe and the United States with her Stars of Faith companions. Through her religious performance, Williams moved away from notions that racialized service labor compounded with feminized service labor required Black women of her era to be primarily concerned with others' pleasure or well-being with an obligation to show deference. The moving, troubled, unsettled, unpredictable body of Marion Williams, mirrored her troubled and precarious lived experiences as a child-maid, orphan, adult domestic laborer, migrant, traveling performer, single mother, and woman of African descent. In conjunction with her lived experiences informed by precarity she simultaneously resisted certain conditions of precarious labor through corporeal mobility. She understood her musical performance and career to be in conversation with her own precarious existence, but shifted her own subjectivity through performance. In contrast to iconic Black women vocalists like Marian Anderson or Mahalia Jackson who are known for legendary performances in service to the nation or toward the project of national healing, Williams moved away from song as service or singing as "healing" care

labor.[45] Marion Williams repeatedly refused to serve just as she refused to be still. Williams' enacted a resistance to service labor, the obligation to care, the bodily comportment expected of those who serve, in addition to resisting vulnerability, namely mortality, through her moving body.

Fundamental to the ring-shout performance heritage and the religious practice spaces from which Williams emerged, is continuous movement and motion that constitute "rituals of improvisation,"[46] and, within this tradition, Williams developed her own signature style.[47] Singer and pianist Marion Williams was one of the earlier known professional woman gospel singers to perform with a level of showmanship and theatricality comparable to and beyond that of her male counterparts and predecessors. Most male performers had gained notoriety through immensely theatrical quartet performance in a tradition led by the Golden Gate Quartet from the 1930s. Williams would "strut, run, Suzy-Q, sashay, sit or kneel" during performances, and she could also "sing softly in a way that evokes erotic goose bumps"[48] with her high wails and low groans. In the era of the 1940s and 1950s, among the many women singers from Negro churches, Williams' voice had amazing range, and she could sing in rounded resonant operatic tones or shrill high-pitched percussive accents in skillful opposition to low growls or sorrowful moans.

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[45] For Griffin's discussion of healing see Griffin, Farah Jasmine. "When Malindy Sings: A Meditation on Black Women's Vocality." Uptown conversation: The new jazz studies (2004): 102-25. Print.

[46] Jonathan David Jackson, "Improvisation in African-American Vernacular Dancing," *Dance Research Journal* (2001).

[47] Ibid.

[48] Heilbut, Anthony. The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times. Hal Leonard Corporation, 1975. Print., 222

She emerged as a lead vocalist for the top selling professional all-woman gospel group.[49] Her theatrical movement and facial expressions during live performances, in addition to her dramatic vocal delivery, are what fueled the commercial success for her all-woman group of singers and musicians from 1947 to 1958. Williams' signature action during performances was to walk through the aisles while singing, and she would also collect congregants' personal items as props during "Packing Up" to complement her incessant dancing and bodily movement. While many within African American religious communities generally disapproved of such showiness and movement, Williams evoked body-centered theology common to "Holiness"[50] or "Sanctified" Pentecostal worship styles which endorsed such embodied faith acts.[51] Williams' ever-moving body, traversed public, secular, commercial and racially integrated spaces and was the site through which she resituated her social and political position as a Negro woman in the mid twentieth century. Ultimately, Williams influenced popular music as well as popular theater and, shortly before her death in 1993, Williams received the MacArthur Award "Genius Grant" in addition to being a Kennedy Center Honoree.

During the Kennedy Center Honors broadcast, Williams accomplished yet again what she had been practicing and achieving for most of her career: she took possession of a space that did

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[49] For more on The Clara Ward Singers see Boyer, Horace Clarence, and Lloyd Yearwood. How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel. Elliott & Clark Washington, DC, 1995. Print., Heilbut, Anthony. The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times. Hal Leonard Corporation, 1975. Print. and Reagon, Bernice Johnson. We'll understand it better by and by: pioneering African American gospel composers. Smithsonian Inst Pr, 1992.

[50] For a discussion of how the term "holiness" has been used see Frazier, E. Franklin, and Charles Eric Lincoln. The negro church in America. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.

[51] For more discussion of faith acts within a Pentecostal liturgy or tradition see Crumbley, Deidre Helen. Saved and Sanctified: The Rise of a Storefront Church in Great Migration Philadelphia. University Press of Florida, 2012.

not otherwise function as a sacred area by enacting an improvisation ritual. For most of the evening, several close-ups of Marion Williams revealed her gracefully aged, chocolate-colored face as she calmly sat flanked on one side by President Bill Clinton who was in office at the time and First Lady Hillary on the other. She smiled and nodded when her musical offspring rendered kind words to celebrate her highly significant yet lesser known career. But when the performers on stage issued the call that would catalyze a version of the ring shout rituals down from her own Pentecostal tradition, she would respond by joining the ring. Williams stood, jumped, swayed, and clapped in resistance to a structure of performance that might allow passive voyeurism from distinguished audience members who were most likely government leaders and corporate executives.

Williams disrupted the performance structure that might suggest service roles for those on stage and simple consumption for those in the audience. By joining the ring with Franklin and Richard, Williams sanctified the balcony with her own Black woman's body and demonstrated a certain indifference to the fact that she had been positioned adjacent to the purported leader of the free world. Compelled by the action of sixty-six year old Williams, the Clintons and the entire audience led by Franklin ended up standing, clapping, jumping, and swaying by the end of the performance. Williams had once again changed the function of the space with her body. The balcony area that had been reserved for elite listeners who had the unilateral option of demonstrating pleasure with the labor of staged singers and musicians, had been transformed by Williams into a performance space. In this way, Williams had taken possession of the space surrounding her body and occupied it with her own performance tradition by demanding a collective and inclusive performance.

Although Williams' numerous performances and tours across the United States and Europe spanned six decades, there are limited textual descriptions of her performances and minimal archival video footage, which have only recently become available. Details of Marion Williams' legendary performances, and her masterful vocality in conjunction with her unruly physicality, had circulated primarily as oral conveyances since the late forties. My analysis of her performance is based on performance reviews of plays in which she was a cast member, song lyrics of some of her often-performed songs, the audio from albums recorded live at her church in Philadelphia, the text printed on the covers of vinyl albums, and a few video clips from televised performances. Still, archival remnants reveal that Williams was a key progenitor of performance modes that fused subterranean sacred ring-shout practices with public presentation in ways that might guarantee expressions of religious zeal, pleasure for the performer, and a good show.

Sanctification and Tradition

Marion Williams' performance practices were a direct result of her specific denominational affiliation with a Pentecostal doctrine that privileged embodied and musical demonstrations of faith *above* verbal confessions and also afforded leadership opportunities to women as early as the 1920s. The religious tradition of bodies moving rigorously in conjunction with improvised vocals had not been common across all Black churches historically, even officially condemned in certain organizational bylaws, and were considered unacceptable and offensive among many Black congregations. One performer who navigated the tension surrounding embodied performance but sided with more conservative groups at the peak of her career was Mahalia Jackson who often delivered a more somber aesthetic. In contrast, it was Williams' transnational performance in *Black Nativity* in the 1960s that ultimately shifted how gospel music was presented through popular entertainment beginning with musical theater, and

subsequently led to the inaccurate association of this performance style with all Black church congregations.

While the figure of a Black (Rhythm and) Blues musician who emerged from "*The* Black Church" is a recurring character in the imaginary of American music, this trope conceals the complicated social history of Black music through, with, and against stratified denominational religious expression from the Civil War through the Civil Rights era. Researchers Robert Taylor, Linda Chatters and Jeff Levin found in a twenty year study of religion for Black Americans that African Americans identity themselves through forty different denominations and histories including but not limited to Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal traditions with multiple variations in doctrine.[52] These doctrinal variations render specific conditions and regulations for how music, the voice, and the body should be used to perform faith within and beyond sacred spaces.

Intersecting the doctrinal differences are class distinctions within Black communities informed by region, education, gender, economic mobility, vocation and migration. For African American expressions of faith, the threads of varying conditions quilt together fabrics of faith and patches of religious practice to form a collection of Black church traditions. Nevertheless, representations of what most now call "Black Gospel" music in contemporary popular American culture including films, commercials, and major televised events present "The Black Church" as a singular, monolithic institution. These images most often include a jubilant, sensational, robed gospel choir in a small Southern church with a leading female/feminine vocalist who spurs the congregation to spirited, spontaneous, physicality called "shouting" dance. Marion Williams is

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[52] Timothy D. Taylor, Mark Katz, and Tony Grajeda, "Music, Sound, and Technology in America: A Documentary History of Early Phonograph, Cinema, and Radio," (2012): 22.

largely responsible for helping to bring this motif into popular entertainment. While this repeated image is not an *un*truth, it does not capture the diverse range of Black church traditions and histories.

Missing from such incomplete and somewhat generic representations are sacred music concerts like the "full oratorio" of Haydn's *Creation* performed in 1841 at the First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia with "a fifty-piece orchestra" conducted by Francis Johnson's classical "chorus of 150 voices" and then conducted by Morris Brown before each went on to open their own colleges.[53] The popular representations of Black religious music most often neglects the history of Black Americans in religious traditions who worked very hard to *not* be identified with such "primitive" expressions "and condemned all forms of religious dance, including the ring shout" as well as vocal styles that indicated "lower class Black religion."[54] Many popular contemporary representations of Black churches yield no trace of the history of denigration, exclusion, and castigation of Black worshippers who practiced this Spirited type of expression through body, music, and voice. The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church for example, "felt so strongly about the encroaching Africanisms" that it passed a special resolution at its annual conference in 1841: "Resolved, that our preachers shall strenuously oppose the singing of fuge tunes and hymns of our own composing in our public places and congregations."[55]

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[53] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 105.

[54] Estrelda Alexander, *Black Fire : One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011), 29.

[55] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 131.

Another example given by Eileen Southern in *The Music of Black Americans* demonstrates how much doctrinal beliefs are intertwined the musical practice and performance of faith. Older members of Bethel, a Philadelphia A.M.E. congregation in 1841 resists the shift from call-and-response or line "lining out" vocal expression to choral music and "singing by note" led by a trained choir. Southern shares an account by Daniel Alexander Payne, an A.M.E minister and church historian who describes the "first introduction of choral singing"[56] into the A.M.E church:

"It gave great offense to the older members, especially those who had professed personal sanctification. Said they: "You have brought the devil in the Church, and therefore we will go out." So, suiting the action to the word, many went out of Bethel, and never returned."

The "Sanctified" members who left that A.M.E. congregation probably left to find sanctified fellowship among the Baptists, or perhaps started their own. The conflict surrounding sanctification would continue for the next hundred years for Black and non-Black religious groups. In the instance above, sanctification was aligned with a more free and expressive style of worship, call-and-response, and the shunning of controlled expressions that required vocal training or literacy. In both examples, the performance of religious music is central to faith-based identity.

By the turn of the century Negro Baptist churches were also shifting their practices away from Africanist improvisation rituals and rhythmic music that encouraged bodily movement. For certain Black Baptists groups, "sanctification and its meaning became divisive."[57] Although

[56] Ibid., 129.

[57] Anthea D. Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ : Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 27.

"Sanctification" is a "term used throughout the history of Christianity" and had been articulated as a doctrine of "Christian Perfectionism" by John Wesley, it took on a new cultural meaning for a contingent of Black Baptists who embraced Holiness teachings in the 1890s. Along with existing teachings that required abstinence from just about everything in order to be sanctified, the version taught be African descended clergy around the turn of the century encouraged embodied expression including ring-shout dance practices.

The start of new denominations promoting sanctification would eventually result in women evangelists traveling all over the country in groups to sing and pray for the unconverted on street corners. A large group broke away from one of the largest Black Baptist organizations completely in 1897 and had their first official meeting as the Church of God In Christ in Lexington Mississippi in a gin house.[58] In 1906 this group of former Baptists converged in Los Angeles at the Azusa revival with others across the country who wanted to maintain the principals and Sanctification as well as exuberant bodily expressions as a worship tradition. That revival was interracial and trans-regional; many denominations sprung up from that meeting including a mixed race group of leaders who incorporated as the Church of God In Christ in 1907 headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee. This Black-led interracial group would eventually succumb to the pressure of racial tensions across the country, and, by the 1920s, most white clergy had amicably separated to form the Assemblies of God, which was the denomination into which Elvis Presley was born. Also by the 1920s, the group leader, Charles Mason, appointed a woman who would establish an autonomous parallel women's organization and be responsible for training women leaders as evangelists and missionaries.

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58 Ibid.

Largely because of the efforts of these women evangelists, COGIC became the largest and fastest growing US denomination of the twentieth century as they established a performance tradition of inhabiting, sanctifying, and possessing all manner of spaces for their work. Evangelists recruited on street corners, under tents during revivals, and in residential prayer meetings, drawing members into a new local church assembly with the COGIC fellowship. The women would perform until they considered there to be enough saved souls to plant a new church for the denomination.[59] At that point, the responsibility of pastoring was turned over to a man, and often one of the founding women was appointed to stay and be the "church mother" of that congregation while the others moved on. This is the performance tradition from which Marion Williams emerged, following guitarist Rosetta Tharpe and pianist Arizona Dranes, both of whom made recording history independent of their sex. Dranes was the first musician to record syncopated gospel music - classified as race music - in 1928, and Tharpe was the first gospel musician to top secular charts in 1942. Dranes had been a traveling accompanist to a revivalist, and Tharpe had been part of a trio led by her evangelist mother.

The gender specific religious and community history of Marion Williams and her antecedents is significant because it reveals how the fervor and theatricality of her performances were rooted in faith practices and body-centered theology. It was because of her faith that she began the practice of sanctification through music and dance. The Pentecostal performance traditions guaranteed a certain physical liberation through improvisation and this practice was a regular occurrence for such women who worked collectively. It is important to recognize this

[59] Ibid. Some of my knowledge about this tradition comes from my family oral history. My great-grandmother, Anne Bailey, was one of these women she is mentioned in the Butler text.

history and culture of collective performance as one that contrasts the model of solo performance with *the help* of background singers who function more as aids rather than participants.

Music was a key element in the Pentecostal evangelism style used to draw new converts and attract those already familiar with Africanist performance that, in the Pentecostal context, was considered Holiness expression. The music of Pentecostal traditions is integral to the practice of faith and is an affirmation of Holy Ghost dogma. Singing, dancing and particularly speaking in tongues was, and is, considered the evidence of one's spiritual belief according to the Holiness church doctrine. According to Don Cusic in *The Sound of Light*, a musical emphasis was an important way to reach the "less-educated" migrants "who wanted to feel a connection to their southern roots."[60] However, it should be noted that the musical emphasis should not be reduced to a gimmick or marketing scheme within folk communities.

Beyond COGIC, this tradition includes women who led their own independent ministries like Reverend Mary Lena Lewis Tate, an evangelist and pastor who travelled from city to city in vocational ministry.[61] Tate is one example among many women who found the freedom to be leaders within a growing Pentecostal movement, in ways that Baptist and Methodist organizations did not allow. While Pastor Tate recruited musicians to accompany her during her vocational travels, there were many women evangelists who provided their own music through song or instruments or were responsible for music or song as part of a ministry team.

Marion Williams, who was also a pianist, recording artist, and the daughter of a woman evangelist, is well situated among Arizona Dranes and Rosetta Tharpe who also shared Williams'

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[60] Don Cusic, *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel Music* (Popular Press, 1990), 147.

[61] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Simon and Schuster, 2009).43

affiliation with COGIC. Marion Williams and her mother were part of a network of women singers and musicians who maintained a Pentecostal tradition of travel and dance-inducing musicality as an expression and conduit of religious belief. This tradition was and is both cultural and political as African descended women draw upon vocal and embodied remnants of ring-shout practices while creating new and alternative spaces of political organization and leadership in American cities, especially during the early twentieth century. Of many commonalities among the three women, those that are significant to this study include: the fact that all three women were considered leaders or leading musicians within the denomination, the fact that all three women continued to practice in church settings during and after crossover success, and the fact that all three women lived through poverty and precarity during and after crossover success. The consistency among the women's performances across audience demographics mirrored the consistency of their precarious lived experiences. In other words, through unencumbered vocals and unrestricted movement, they created performance practices that acknowledged the instability endured by African American women in their era.

It is important to situate Williams among Dranes and Tharpe because all three women traversed secular spaces and continued to be active performers within their shared religious community. Their work outside of sacred spaces is in contrast to the career of Mahalia Jackson who very publicly refused to perform in secular venues for most of her career. For Mahalia Jackson, a Baptist, the location defined the sanctity of the work. For Williams and her Pentecostal forerunners, it was the body that determined the sanctity of the work, and actions from the body could in turn sanctify any space. Both Arizona Dranes and Rosetta Tharpe were esteemed for both their contributions as professional musicians within the recording industry, and also for continued ministry work and folk practices within their religious organization to

varying degrees. Arizona Dranes was eventually credited for being the first pianist to record the "gospel Beat" that was closely associated with Pentecostal dancing and embodiment, as well as Ragtime, and would later be associated with Rock n' Roll. Dranes is believed to have converted in her twenties after being educated in a school for blind and working as the pianist for a local theater near Dallas, Texas. During and after her recordings on OKEH records in the 1920s, Dranes never stopped working as a church musician and for many years traveled with preachers from state to state understanding her recordings to be an extension of her vocational ministry. Like Dranes, Williams also continued to practice primarily in religious spaces after her more famous appearances in Langston Hughes productions and in secular concert spaces.

Not only was Williams a community practitioner throughout her professional career, but she would eventually become a religious leader as well. She was given the title "Church Mother" working alongside her woman pastor at B.M. Oakley Memorial COGIC Memorial Temple in Philadelphia. Although women pastors are still not generally accepted within the COGIC organization, Mother Oakley and others were exceptions to this rule when they took pastoral duties at the deaths of their husbands. Anthea Butler explains the title of "Church Mother" for many African American Pentecostal organizations as women who had "the authority they needed both inside and outside of their congregations to engage in much of the same work that men were doing."[62] In some cases the church mother was the highest authority at a given church, especially in cases where the pastors where sometimes younger men who could be publicly chastised by her. Williams became a church mother in Philadelphia while continuing to record and perform nationally in both church settings and secular spaces. She built upon the precedents of female performers within her own faith community. Both Dranes and Tharpe continued to perform at

[62] Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ : Making a Sanctified World*, 44.

gatherings of their shared church community throughout their careers. From Dranes, Williams had the precedent of a commercial performance "career" that did not diminish her religious vocation or calling. From Tharpe, Williams had the precedent of a performing sacred music in secular spaces without a conflict of personal faith or religious belief.

Marion Williams first practiced and performed movement-driven religious song styles anonymously in a network Pentecostal church communities that might qualify as what Daphne Brooks describes as "subterranean" spaces. Both of Williams' parents were singers in Holiness churches in Miami and Marion Williams began performing as a child.[63] On weekends she sang in storefront churches and at street corner revivals and with age went from church to church on Sunday singing among different congregations as a soloist.[64] This activity for Marion was not only in service to the congregants and she herself derived pleasure through the act of performance that contrasted her weekday service work as a laundress in a factory. It was this performance across churches and across communities that led Williams to perform in Philadelphia where she was visiting a cousin in 1947. During this trip she was 'discovered' by the leader of a family singing group called The Ward Singers who witnessed one of Williams' Philadelphia performances. Clara Ward and her mother asked Williams to join their singing group. Williams declined. After Williams returned home to Miami, The Ward Singers actively recruited her for several months until she agreed to leave her grueling 'dirty work' at the laundry factory and join them as a full time traveling performer.

Dirty Work and Background Performance

[63] This phrase taken from liner notes: Heilbut, Anthony. "Marion Williams Born to Sing the Gospel." Ed. Williams, Marion1988. Print.

[64] Marion Williams, *The Great Gospel Voice of Marion Williams. [Sound Recording]* (n.p.: Epic LN 24175. 1965), p. 2 s. 12 in. 33 1/3 rpm. microgroove.

Williams' long hours doing laundry in an industrial setting were emblematic of the fact that reproductive labor had been changing in structure and proximity to the site of care and a parallel shift in regard to proximity was taking place in terms of music, new technologies, and Black vocality.[65] This meant that more "dirty work,"[66] like laundering for example, was taking place outside of the home and tasks were being performed with the help of new technologies.[67] In a similar vein, the sound of the Black woman vocalist, part healer and part entertainer, was widely accessible through records and radio in homes without her having to be physically present, faced, or directly addressed. Although the phonograph made the "presence" of Black women like Bessie Smith women from the 1920s, it was not until the 1950s that Black women were widely aired on radio in the US to further their ephemeral 'movement' through domestic spaces in the absence of actual bodies. In the case of both domestic work and vocality, Black women's labor found its way into homes even when their bodies were no longer in close proximity to the location of service. Record, radio and television opened new opportunities for Black women vocalists to produce affect in ways that in some instances concealed the source of that performance labor, just as factory laundry settings distanced those providing reproductive labor from those who would benefit.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, racial-ethnic women were primarily employed as servants to perform reproductive labor in white households, relieving white middle-

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[65] Weheliye, *Phonographies*.

[66] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs* (1992): 1-43.

[67] Mignon Duffy, "Reproducing Labor Inequalities Challenges for Feminists Conceptualizing Care at the Intersections of Gender, Race, and Class," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 1 (2005): 66-82.

class women of onerous aspects"[68] of reproductive labor that contradicted the image of the pure and spotless feminine nurturer. The "onerous" aspects, or the "dirty work" delegated to racial-ethnic women included "non-relational"[69] jobs that are also "necessary to ensure the daily reproduction of the labor force" like cleaning, cooking, and laundry work. In contrast, care labor in the narrowest sense would only include "relational" labor, like the socialization of children, which is qualified by face-to-face encounters or voice-to-voice communication.[70] The sexual division of labor, which relegated reproductive labor or domestic labor to women, was compounded by the fact that reproductive labor has been simultaneously racialized so that racial-ethnic women have more often done the "dirty work" of reproductive labor.[71] By the 1950s there was a deepening of the divide between types of feminized reproductive labor along racial ethnic lines. In some ways, the labor relegated to racial ethnics shared common characteristics with Black performance labor. Actions requiring face-to-face contact were reserved for those with a higher social status among the service class, while 'dirty work' might take place with even less proximity to the site of care. Within the service industry, dirty work was more often assigned to racial-ethnic women. Within the entertainment industry, 'dirty work' was labor that did not

[68] Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work."

[69] Duffy, "Reproducing Labor Inequalities Challenges for Feminists Conceptualizing Care at the Intersections of Gender, Race, and Class."

[70] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling, with a New Afterword* (Univ of California Press, 2003).

[71] Mignon Duffy, "Doing the Dirty Work Gender, Race, and Reproductive Labor in Historical Perspective," *Gender & Society* 21, no. 3 (2007).; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Racial Ethnic Women's Labor: The Intersection of Race, Gender and Class Oppression," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 17, no. 3 (1985): 104. ; Rose M. Brewer, "Theorizing Race, Class and Gender: The New Scholarship of Black Feminist Intellectuals and Black Women's Labor," *Race, Gender & Class* (1999): 36, 41.

require performers to 'face' or 'be faced' by audiences and many manifestations of this labor structure applied specifically to Black performers and Black women performing as background singers in particular through the 1960s and beyond.

While the group of women doing this dirty work included immigrants from various racial and ethnic categories, women who were (or became) white were more likely to "marry-up" based on their socializing and become housewives without leaving a legacy of domestic service to their daughters. In contrast, Negro women were more likely to do service work for multiple generations without the opportunity for social mobility through marriage. Marion Williams was the daughter of a service worker, and she was initially no exception as she continued the trajectory of multi-generational precarious work. Around the time that her father was murdered by a mistress, her mother became a double amputee.[72] Williams recounts working as a laundress in a washing facility and working so many hours that she "rarely saw a weekday sun."[73] She avoided a long career doing 'dirty work' as a factory worker. However, her work as a Black woman vocalist still qualified as reproductive labor in certain contexts, and her backgrounded role within the Clara Ward Singers group also qualified as dirty work.

By 1951 the Ward Singers had been renamed the *Clara* Ward Singers, and the group had become a national sensation across Black church communities had reportedly surpassed the more celebrated Mahalia Jackson in record sales.[74] Although this singing group had already existed for

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[72] Horace Clarence Boyer and Lloyd Yearwood, *How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel* (Elliott & Clark Washington, DC, 1995). and Williams, *The Great Gospel Voice of Marion Williams. [Sound Recording]*.

[73] Anthony Heilbut, *The Fan Who Knew Too Much: Aretha Franklin, the Rise of the Soap Opera, Children of the Gospel Church, and Other Meditations* (Random House LLC, 2012).

[74] Willa Ward-Royster, *How I Got Over: Clara Ward and the World-Famous Ward Singers* (Temple University Press, 1997).

years as the Clara Ward Singers before aggressively recruiting Williams, it was not until Williams' song "Packing Up" became a hit record among gospel music listeners that the group became nationally known with corresponding commercial success. Although Williams traveled as a member of the highly successful *Clara Ward Singers* for nine years after the lead singer recruited her from a church in Philadelphia in 1949, neither Williams' name nor face appeared in publicity or promotion during that time. Williams spent most of her early career as an unarchived performer in public yet segregated, all-Black, subterranean, Protestant spaces. It was Williams' voice that catapulted the group into radio fame as the group's most successful singles were the songs on which she sang the lead vocals, and it was Williams' showiness that made there concerts so popular. In fact, Williams taught Ward, a Baptist, her Pentecostal performance technique.[75] But with little exception, Williams' name was never printed in the dozens upon dozens of mentions of the group in Black newspapers where credit was only given to the group's namesake, Clara Ward. In the many photos that accompanied those press mentions, Marion Williams face was almost never not pictured. In spite of great success for the group, Williams spent eleven years of her career as a nameless and faceless vocalist who essentially functioned as a background singer without attribution.

The peak of Williams' career came after she and fellow background singers left the Clara Ward group in 1958 and formed a new group called Stars of Faith. The Stars had limited success during their first few years and during this time Williams also gave birth to a child. During this same time Williams released a Christmas album with very little success and also recommitted herself to her faith. She credited this part of her faith journey as the catalyst for a call she received from a music industry executive in 1960. He wanted to sign her to a record deal and a

[75] Boyer and Yearwood, *How Sweet the Sound*.

management contract as a solo artist. He made swift plans to produce her Christmas album and eventually commissioned Langston Hughes to write the script that would become *Black Nativity,* a production centered entirely around her vocal performance. Williams had the opportunity to forge a solo career path similar to that of Rosetta Tharpe or perhaps the more revered Mahalia Jackson who, at this point, was turning down opportunities to sing because she was adamantly opposed to performing in certain secular spaces. Williams finally got her chance to be 'the face' of her own performance as a solo artist and Kramer had the credibility and connections to catapult her career. Williams declined. Soon after she would consent to an agreement that included the Stars of Faith and instead of performing as a soloist, she would perform for about the next decade as a lead singer alongside the other Stars who were also named, pictured, and featured as soloists as well. Williams demonstrated that she was committed to a career of collective performance over the isolated labor required by a soloist. Williams also demonstrated that, at that point, she preferred collective identity above being 'the face' of the performance while others labor anonymously in the background.

Healing Labor

Marion Williams was born into a cultural and family history of racialized labor conditions that informed her career. Her South Carolinian mother was a domestic worker as well as a singing "prayer warrior," and her West Indian father was a butcher as well as a piano teacher in Miami, Florida where she was born in 1927.[76] In 1930 during the Depression, her mother was one of the Negro women who made up the 62.3% of Negro women who did work categorized as

[76] Anthony Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times* (Hal Leonard Corporation, 1975).

"servant" or "service work."[77] Williams also began working as a child maid and nurse, and she left school at the age of fourteen to work full time in private homes and in industrial settings in 1941. The expectation of service work and reproductive labor from black-bodied women and girls would extend to the performance careers of those with laudable vocal music abilities. Farah Jasmine Griffin argues that black female vocality has been used in service of the nation to heal and nurture in a way that continues the mythology and history of black nurse maids who often sang as they labored to care for children who were not their own. In her chapter "When Malindy Sings: A Meditation on Black Vocality" (2004), Griffin suggests that the narrative of black female vocality has developed right along with the nation itself with the black female vocalist being a "figure that serves the unit, who heals and nurtures it but has no rights or privileges within it," and is therefore "more mammy than mother."[78] Griffin explains how the labor of the Black female vocalist has helped the nation imagine itself healed "at a time of national crisis" or national vulnerability while the "singing spectacle" of Black vocality "projects" what the Nation longs to become.

Griffin's examples are of soloists who performed in those instances with little movement, and limited improvisation if any at all. She includes ten "iconic" moments of black female vocality which "stand out in national memory."[79] Mahalia Jackson's March on Washington

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[77] Nakano Glenn, "Racial Ethnic Women's Labor," 93. Glenn presents that in 1930 Black women 35.4% Service work, 27.2% Servants/Laundresses, 26.9 Agriculture, 3.4 % professional, 0.8% trade, 0.1% Public service, .6% clerical, 5.5% Manufacturing, 0.1% Transportation. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteen Census of the United States: 1930, Population,* Volume 5, General Report on Occupations, Chapter 3, Color and Nativity of Gainful Workers. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), Tables 2, 4, and 6. (Glenn 1985)

[78] Farah Jasmine Griffin, "When Malindy Sings: A Meditation on Black Women's Vocality," *Uptown conversation: The new jazz studies* (2004): 104.

[79] Ibid., 121.

performance shares space on this list alongside Marion Anderson performing at the Lincoln Memorial (1939), Whitney Houston singing the "Star SpBangled Banner" at the Super Bowl during the Gulf war and Aretha Franklin singing it the same year at the Democratic National Convention (1992), and several anonymous black women who performed at public memorials immediately following the Oklahoma bombing and mass shootings in Texas and Colorado. [80] While their bodies are mostly still, their voices are responsible for the affect of the nation and therefore expected to "move" the hearts of the listeners with a "moving" performance. The action words "move" and "moving" appear here repeatedly to draw attention to the affective labor and the care labor performed by Black women through voice.

It is possible that Marion Williams never achieved widespread fame, and therefore was never called upon in times of national crisis to perform healing labor, because her performance style demanded high degrees of vocal improvisation, incessant bodily movement, and collective participation. While the iconic vocal performances on Griffin's list involve moving vocals that are musically fluid in a gospel-blues style, the bodies of the women themselves are generally at attention and their feet remain planted throughout the performance. Even performers like Whitney Houston and Aretha Franklin, who are known to render highly skilled, melismatic, and soulful performances, avoid motion and improvised movement of voice or body during the iconic performances Griffin listed. For example, the Houston performance was pre-recorded to ensure a controlled performance outcome. Through the lens that Griffin puts forth for performance toward imagined healing, the stillness of the performers' bodies can signify Black women-in waiting or women in service. While a still comportment is not uncommon for professional vocalists in various contexts, and stillness can certainly also signify sustained

[80] Ibid., 102.

resistance and quiet rebellion, the reserved comportment in the context of care labor might indicate a level of subordination. Bodies in service, of any race, are often expected to perform tasks as given without improvisation, amusement, or self-gratification, and to only move when necessary to perform service requested by a superior. Perhaps Williams' incessant movement and performance of improvisation rituals is why she never emerged as the voice of healing during a national crisis in her lifetime and never attained the icon status of her contemporaries Marian Anderson and Mahalia Jackson.

Marion Williams' career demonstrates that service and the comportment of servitude was not the only performance mode available to Black female vocalists during the twentieth century. For example, Angela Davis has presented in *Blues Women* how the work of performers like Bessie Smith was self-affirming. In terms of sacred music, there are also possibilities for Black woman vocality that functions as self affirming and self healing. For Marion Williams and her collaborators, this self healing function was in conjunction with corporeal movement. The "physical behavior that accompanied the performance - including hand-clapping, foot-stomping, and other body movements that had been integral performance practices of the folk spiritual"[81] constitute a tradition of self-healing through collective participation. Extending this critical intervention to the genre of gospel, the importance of movement within Black religious musical performance derived from Africanist expressions and maintained by Pentecostal practices cannot be overstated.

The potential for mutual healing and restoration associated with the bodies of moving, African descended people in relation to religion and spirituality is addressed by dance scholars

[81] Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study," *African American Review* (1995): 190.

Brenda Dixon Gottschild and Thomas Defrantz. In terms of religious practice Gottschild writes: "it makes good sense that we use our ordinary physical bodies as a means to transport us to extraordinary flight of the Spirit" and goes on to trace the joint practices of dance and spirituality to "African roots."[82] Additionally, DeFrantz suggests that social or vernacular dance as "corporeal orature" may contain performative gestures that "do things" and cite context or incite action beyond the dance.[83] In the context of gospel music performance, these possibilities are what I understand to be the potentiality of moving black bodies that are simultaneously troubled and have the capacity to heal.

In a similar thread, DeFrantz writes specifically about social dance or vernacular dance practices suggesting that, "All African diaspora dance, including black social dances, may be likened to verbal language most in its conspicuous employment of "call and response" with the body responding to and provoking the voice of the drum.[84] He goes on to assert: "The connection of spirituality and social dance is not casual […] and the best dancers in the black tradition are considered to be those who can tap into the spirituality of the dance"[85] Building upon these contributions I understand that physicality, movement and dance within a social or religious context is integral to the circular performance tradition of call and response and therefore warrants critical analysis in conjunction with vocality.

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[82] Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (Palgrave Macmillan New York, 2003), 15.

[83] Thomas F. DeFrantz, "The Black Beat Made Visible: Hip Hop Dance and Body Power," *Of the presence of the body: Essays on dance and performance theory* (2004): 4.

[84] Ibid., 3.

[85] Ibid., 12.

Gottschild also suggests that this same transport ability is accessible to congregations in the same tradition where "freeform sermons and singing result in a commitment level of reform, participatory congregational response" and contrasts this to a Europeanist context where such "lack of (institutional) control is seen as indecent, low class, and primitive."[86] Compatible with this recognition is Jayna Brown's assertion that, "Black vernacular dance" has often been "dismissed as subordinate" to music, with work that centers the body as the primary site of cultural production. Still, Brown offers "jass" is an example of music that was always produced "in conjunction with movement" in places where song, dance and improvisation all came together.[87] In a similar way, body-centered religious musical performance has been and is created in connection with dance forms that are simultaneously sacred and social.

Williams' redistribution of affective care labor or healing labor, through performance rituals that privileged the collective, was one way that she countered any expectations that she and her fellow performers bear the full burden of that labor on behalf of the audience. Reviews surrounding Marion Williams' multiple runs of *Black Nativity* in Paris over the span of five years include accounts of her collective performance practices through which participants might help to heal each other and themselves. One reviewer wrote, "A great success! A few spectacles like this in every season would be a profitable cure for us"[88] while dozens more described the improvisation rituals that resituated audience members as collaborative performers. Following a 1965 performance one writer contributed:

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[86] Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body*, 38.

[87] Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Duke University Press, 2009), 4, 13.

[88] "Arts Et Spectacles," (1964).

> The spectacle began an hour before. Suddenly the lights came on. One of the singers from 'Stars of Faith' comes down from the stage, walking slowly (in the aisle) between the seats, and encouraging the audience to clap their hands in rhythm. The hall is following her. Tuxedos and the long dresses are in rage.[89]

This description suggests that that house lights were turned on so that audiences would no longer have the distance of darkness separating them form the lighted performers as Stars moved through aisles among the people. With this shift, audience members would be able to participate in the ring-shout ritual and enact their own healing through movement rather than simply being the recipients of care labor from the black-bodied cast members. Certain collective performances encourage instant reciprocity.

Collective performances of this nature took place in the "Holiness" churches of which Marion Williams and her parents were members and where Williams continued to worship and practice throughout her life. During such performances and within such practices, listeners and performers are "mutually dependent" in the way that certain scholars have imagined as the response to precarity and human vulnerability. These performances are not organized around vertical hierarchies that demand dominance or subordination (although such vertical structures often exist outside of the performance moment). While service does in fact still take place, certain African American practices evoke ring-shout forms and congregants perform in circularity so that all participants are simultaneously performers and witnesses, healers and recipients of care.[90]

While the iconic Mahalia Jackson was becoming more publicly linked to her political leanings against injustice through performance that was more still and sustained, Marion

[89] Jean-Claude Lattes, "Black Nativity in the Theatre of Champs Elysees."

[90] Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Williams was becoming more associated with the revolt of pleasure filled entertainment from the bodies of women who turn their performances inward and orient their attention to each other and themselves. In 1963, the same year that Martin Luther King, Jr gave his "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington where Mahalia Jackson had performed, the less revered Marion Williams and the Stars of Faith toured Europe for the second time doing concerts and performances of the play *Black Nativity*. Over the course of multiple overseas tours, Williams and her collaborators disrupted the structure of performance care labor including several notable performances taking place in and around Paris, France.

Paris Possession

Marion Williams with the Stars of Faith performed in at least three runs of *Black Nativity* in Europe on tours between 1962 and 1965, and, during this time, they repeatedly took possession of commercial spaces to sanctify those venues through embodied movement. In other words, Williams and her collaborators claimed those spaces as their own and circumvented performance structures that might have demanded their subjection or subservience. The process of possession and sanctification began with bodily movement led by Marion Williams and the collective assertion through performance that their own bodies were sacred spaces and could effectively sanctify the area that they occupied. Evidence of success for Williams and her collaborators can be found in the writing of journalists who seemed entranced with her body and the collective movement she led in ways that matched or exceeded the attention they gave to her voice or the production overall. Multiple journalists and critics in different cities over a span of several years used the language of affect, preternatural and natural phenomenon, magic, and even ownership to describe the Stars of Faith. The group of women transcended roles of reproductive laborer to enact personal pleasure and compelled all those in attendance to join in their ritual of sanctification. Articles convey how the Stars of Faith led by Williams inhabited and commanded

both physical and ephemeral spaces far beyond the confines of the stages that were designated for presentation.

The play sat in Paris at least five times with glowing reviews. Beyond the commentary surrounding the structure and form, there were numerous discussants who described the performances in highly emotive and affective terms. In earlier years (1961 and 1962) there was little commentary written about *Black Nativity* performance and one writer suggests that critics had not yet developed the language to discuss the new 'gospel-song-play' form that only recently emerged at that time. By 1965, when the cast had performed live on European television at least twice, there were dozens of articles reviewing the work of Marion Williams and her collaborators in and around Paris. One writer gushed with questions to indicate a happily unsettled demeanor:

> The crowded Champs-Elysees theatre could not hold everyone who was willing to see the play. And with strong applause, the audience showed their respect and affinity for the Black artists, who they will talk about for a long, long time… How to resist this truth, this 'sacred swing'? How not to be carried away by those women occupied with their songs, by those women with hands clapping, ending with the voice that comes from the heart?[91]

Most recollections by writers emit high levels of enthusiasm with liberal usages of words indicating an atmosphere of joy and even love. This is the case in one 1965 review stating: "They are singing, they are dancing, they are clapping with their hands and the religion becomes this big celebration of love, where one thing in common is spiritualizing by the rhythm and vocal art"[92] to indicate that the sanctifying process carried out by Williams and collaborators had been effective in some way.

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[91] Alain Guerin, "If You Love the Jazz," 1-19-1965 1965.

[92] P.K., "Avant-Premiere Au Theatre Des Champs-Elysees - Black Nativity - Sacred Art of Gospel," 1-17-1965 1965; ibid.

Also among the articles published in Paris, London, Bordeaux, Lausanne, and other cities during that time, there is repeated mention of Marion Williams' voice, energy, and facial expressions, with recurrent emphasis on her large, dancing body. While Williams' voice exemplifies the athleticism that she is partially responsible for introducing to commercial soul music, which has now become standard form in popular music, it was her large buoyant body in conjunction with co-performers that worked to take over foreign spaces and have them function as their own. One writer recounts the scene that was Stars of Faith:

> If you were watching 'Black Nativity' with eyes wide open, you saw six black singers, not very pretty, in white shirts, bare feet, with complicated and ornamented hair. One of them dressed in red, captain of the troop, was Marion Williams trotting along with small steps to carry the weight of her belly.[93]

Another writer recalls, "She is black but she is corpulent. Her smile is dazzling with this particularity. On the one of her teeth is the gold. Gold is star shaped and that is her only jewel"[94] to join other journalists and critics who make note of her size with additional attention to the dark color of her skin. The same writer also contributes, "I arrived to the scene of Gymnase before the rise of the curtain. Here it wasn't just ten black people, but ten Black persons dressed up, big men and the corpulent women, especially one"[95] to suggest that Williams was not only the leader in terms of musical ability, but also in the way she occupied space with her person.

Most journalists who wrote about *Black Nativity* performances in Paris and other European cities during the multiple tours described the minimal set, which consisted of a blue

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[93] "Black Nativity – the Missioners Who Sing – Singing Missioners," *Cartier*, 1-17-1965 1965.

[94] Hugette Faget, "Marion Williams, the Best Interpret of the 'Negro Spirituals'," 4-2-1965.

[95] Hugette Faget "Marion Williams, the best interpret of the 'negro spirituals'", 2.4.1965

backdrop, a piano, a small organ and two benches. This simple design emphasized bodies and movement of the performers.[96] The "bare expressionism" of the set allowed witnesses to notice the physical details of the bodies like the way they were "playing the rhythm with their feet, performed with humor of certain movements" and the "clap of their hands" while "inviting the public to join them."[97] In contrast to recurring descriptions of Williams' body and collaborator movements across dozens of press mentions there is hardly any comment on the narrator who tells the story of Jesus' birth or the two dancers who portray Mary and Joseph in Act One of the play.

More common was the amazement surrounding Marion Williams' size and the way that she took up physical space with comportment and mobility. For example, the English translation of a 1963 headline for a French language article reviewing the play *Black Nativity* reads, "12 black angels enchant Paris," with the caption, "Madame 100,000 volts of the Negro-Spiritual" beneath her photo. The "volts" reference not only signifies Williams' voice, but also conveys dynamicism of her corporeal delivery. The writer who documents Williams as "Madame 100,000 volts" recounts her "celestial voice that flows from a mountain of fat" while praising her spontaneity. While my literal translation, "mountain of fat," has surely lost the nuance of its intended praise, the words undoubtedly reference her heavenly voice as a product of her larger than average earthly body. The writer evokes a mountain and a river as metaphors for her body and voice in tandem with a reference to volts of lightening without acknowledging her deliberate delivery or volitional expertise.

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[96] This same minimalist set was used during critically and culturally acclaimed performances in New York during the 1961-1962 holiday season.

[97] Francois de Santerre, "In the Theatre of Champs-Elysees Reprise of the Black Nativity " *Le Figaro*, 1-19-1965.

This implies that the performance seems, to him, more like a natural phenomenon than a practiced skill or the result of years of training across both commercial and vernacular spaces. These associations with acts of nature help to distance Williams' performance from refined art or even cultural practice, so that her performance is associated with the realm of nonhuman cosmic occurrence. This relegation of her performance to the domain of unintentional acts that are natural phenomena rather than conscious human art and culture is troubling. Praises of her performance that include allusions to natural phenomena could mean that her performance was interpreted as instinctive at best and nonhuman at worst, but clearly not studied, learned, or cultivated.

In this way, the mountain and river comments are related to multiple interpretations that posit Stars of Faith musical renderings as magical or supernatural. A writer for the *La Tribune de Genève* put forth, "there is no similar condition to this. The gospel owns the power of irresistible communication, almost magical"[98] to suggest a non-logical attraction to the powerful form. The same writer admits that the spectacle is "challenging" for those who are critics and will find themselves "joining with the public" in a collective response to suggest the power of the preternatural experience. Another writer acknowledged the "pure technique" of the singers to suggest some level of deliberate skill but ultimately conveys, "On the sound of 'I see Jesus' or the final 'May God be with you' a joy followed by trance is spreading upon the audience, they are clapping with hands, and they are fighting in the rhythm. It's really much stronger than any yé-yé in the world"[99] to classify the event in terms of spiritual phenomenon.

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[98] "In the Grand-Theatre," *La tribune de Genève* 11-27-1964

[99] "Black Nativity – the Missioners Who Sing – Singing Missioners."

A different critic enthusiastically describes the "enchantment" and "trance" brought on by Williams and collaborators, which conveys how an atmosphere of spiritual possession is the conduit through which Williams and the Stars take possession of the hall:

> They are performing and at the same time fascinating us and commanding our attention. One cannot escape from the feeling that cannot be defined, feeling all over again during the performance. We are exposed to the enchantment that is echoing among the singers and the intensity grows until the point of culmination of their presentation, which coinciding with the final sounds of excitement uncontrolled. In this moment, the artists own the hall; they are mixing with the audience and inviting them to share their jubilations, their enthusiasm followed by constantly clapping of the hands. The voices sound heavenly, consuming and unsettling, melted in one choir of harmony and supported by the chords of organs, piano and the rhythm of the tambourine. The ten artists who are surrounding Marion Williams form a unified group in the one sort of trance. [100]

This transposition from "enchantment" to a dynamic where "the artists own the hall" having claimed possession of the space is indicative of the sanctifying process - making space sacred through bodily movement - that Williams and collaborators had enacted. They had perfected a hybrid of ring-shout folk practices and Pentecostal traditions toward a pleasurable commercial presentation. Critics confirmed that Williams and collaborators had effectively sanctified the space itself by shifting its function with comments like: "This spectacle is presented as an artistic at the same time as mystic: the entertainment meets here the most possible serious ceremony;"[101] "*Black Nativity* is not anything but a beautiful spectacle…. It is also a place of pilgrimage,"[102]

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[100] Pierre Ferjac, "Black Nativity in the Theatre of Champs-Elysees,"

, 1-23-1965.

[101] P.K. "Black Nativity - Sacred art of gospel: Avant-premiere au theatre des Champs-Elysees." 17.1.1965

[102] Lattes, "Black Nativity in the Theatre of Champs Elysees."

and “the artists […] establish this unity of scene and the hall. No-one can… stay insensible to the fever and enthusiasms of those acts of faith.”[103]

The gospel-song-play form infused with ring-shout improvisation rituals did not only function as a vehicle for shifting the power structure from enchantment to possession, but it also signaled insubordination for black-bodied women who might otherwise be constrained to lives of perpetual servitude both within and beyond sacred spaces. Marion Williams and the women of Stars of Faith claimed possession of their labor by demanding collective participation instead of simply becoming the object of the spectator’s gaze Their European performances in this way were also in direct conversation with homeland conditions of racial inequality and labor inequality for Black women. At least one critic recognized the disruptive potential for this mode of insubordinate performance:

> With rhythm it looks like she is giving, to the ones that feel overwhelmed, a new approach and manipulation of reality. Above all of these we know that the jazz is born from those songs. We also know that the religion wasn’t always opium for the Black people from United States, but more often a way of liberation. The Black and Brown are transforming the melody to the song of the revolt.[104]

However, live performances enabled Williams and collaborators to practice the possession of space through voice and body in ways that recorded or broadcast performances did not. When Williams and the Stars accepted opportunities for televised presentations of their work, the methods they had perfected for the possession of space were not perfectly compatible. Williams and her collaborators employed an alternate approach in order to convey the same levels of sanctity and insubordination for television viewers that had been accomplished in concert and theater settings.

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[103] Santerre, "In the Theatre of Champs-Elysees Reprise of the Black Nativity ".

[104] Guerin, "If You Love the Jazz."

Televised Pleasure and Indifference

The televised performances of Marion Williams, which were broadcast during the height of her mainstream notoriety in the early to mid 1960s, reveal acts of indifference that signified a certain disregard for the audience and viewers at home in favor of her own pleasure and collaboration with fellow performers.

A televised performance of Williams' signature song "Packing Up" was captured during the live taping of a 1960s program called *Hootenanny* (1963-1964), which was a series showcasing folk music. The show was filmed at different college campuses across the United States before live all-white audiences. The host of the show introduced the Stars of Faith with the up-tempo song already in progress and Williams preparing to sing lead. Williams' voice fades in to audibility with her signature high pitched "Wooooooooooooo" - which had already been famously appropriated by her fan Little Richard - just before the announcer announced her name and turned away from the camera toward the stage. The camera zoomed past the hosts' shoulder and over the heads of spectators to frame the female vocalists.

Her first detectable movement was a slight bouncing motion coming from her left foot and knee as she raises and lowers her left heel, which is keeping time. At this point Williams' body seems less formal and more relaxed than the other singers whose bodies are very tight and close together while their eyes intently focused on the shared microphone. Their attention, energy, and glances were directed less to the audience and more toward each other. Williams, however, seemed more like she was leisurely keeping time to a favorite song in her own private space rather than putting on a public show. Still singing, Williams casually looked over the audience and began to sway in a manner that signifies unconcern.

On a narrow platform that was surrounded on all four sides with audience members from the college, four of the singers circled around one microphone. They were wearing the same style

of dress with fabric draping from shoulders to wrists concealing their arms. Two of these women wore a lighter color, and two others in a darker shade of the same-style and the dresses fell just below their knees. With a conservative neckline, three of the women had up-do hairstyles or short styles or that stayed in place throughout the performance and the fourth wore a close-fitting hat covering her hair completely. The four singers were of medium build, varying heights, and varying ages including a mother and adult daughter pair.

Williams, the fifth singer, started stage right of that cluster with her own microphone. She was wearing a dress unlike the others with a shinier fabric, shorter elbow-length sleeves, a lower neckline exposing her clavicle and mid-shoulders, and the length fell to her mid-calf. Williams wore the brightest color - perhaps a shade of cream - and the dress was only slightly fitted to reveal during certain movements the rounded lines of her body both above and below the gathered waist. Her hair was styled in a ponytail positioned high up on her head with the hair fallen to her mid upper back so that it would swing across her back and shoulders when she moved. Her body appears shorter and wider than those of the other four singers who are in part concealed by each other's bodies because they are standing so close. Williams' form, however, was viewable from all sides by the audience and when she spiraled and turned throughout the performance each vantage point was offered a more complete view.

Williams' body and movements would not clearly qualify as "bluesy" or sexual, because she is fully clothed without a gaudy costume or jewelry. In addition, her body type, short and round, is more consistent with one that reads "mammy" than sex object. With her body, Williams approaches but does not cross the boundaries that signify sexuality. She is dressed like a church lady: showing no cleavage, a dress well below the knee, and adorned only with a sparkling smile without lipstick or noticeable makeup. Without clothing or objects that clearly mark the

conventional production of desire toward the female body, Williams' body itself is the location from which desire is produced during a gospel music revue.

A shift occurs after about forty-seconds of singing when Williams delivers the lyrics, "I've got my sword… I've got my shield" which was most likely referring to the "sword of the spirit and the shield of faith" referenced in the New Testament Bible. To animate the text, first she loosely swings an invisible sword in her left hand which is closed into a fist, but then, on beat, forcefully brings in that arm with a controlled thrust so that her fist and forearm end up close to her body, near her waist, and parallel to the floor. The movement for Williams seems to signify putting one's sword in the sheath for travel, and this sudden thrust contrasts her initially fluid and slight gestures. In the biblical Protestant context being armed with the "sword of the spirit" would mean traveling or, more broadly, living as a prepared Christian soldier. However, Williams' deliberate and strong movement accompanied by her look of amusement immediately afterward suggests that the movement is playful.

Her body movements increase in vigor from this point on. This shift suggests that her previous slight gestures of unconcern were coy and, possibly, even calculated. During the remainder of the performance of the song that runs two minutes and thirty-seconds or so, she smiles frequently, and wiggles her entire body almost incessantly. Without slipping into a full shimmy, Williams wiggles back and forth making full use of the small stage and at one point she plants her three-inch heels for a while in mid stride allowing the audience and camera to see her side profile in all of its full-figured glory. Marion Williams embodied "Black female unruliness" from performers who are "refusing to behave."[105]

[105] Brown, *Babylon Girls*.

Williams performs without the somber aesthetic of reverence that is often associated with faith practitioners. Instead, Williams smiles and seems always on the verge of laughter. At first glance, without critical interrogation, one might associate the larger-than-average smile with an aspect of coonery or minstrel-like subjugation. The 'coon' interpretation is incongruent with Williams' style because her smiles are not directed at the audience in an effort to win approval. Instead, they are her private smiles that she has made available to onlookers throughout her public affirmation of self. Her brilliant white smile - which is much brighter than her light colored dress - flashes like jewelry in contrast to her darker shade of skin that is otherwise absent of jeweled ornamentation. As in the case of her first major smile of the performance when she seemed tickled by her play of 'putting the sword in the sheath', her subsequent smiles appear to be an indication of her approval of the vigorous movements and skillful sounds coming from her own body at will.

During a climactic section of the 1963 Hootenanny performance, Williams turns her back(side) to the front and center section of the audience, but she faces the Black male musician who is playing stand-up bass. A camera shooting from the area behind the musician frames Williams, the male musician and a male audience member. Williams comes face to face with the musician and sings with only inches between their faces. The musician continues to play, perhaps with more inspiration, and we see the white male audience member looking on from his seat, which is right at the edge the narrow stage a few feet behind Williams. Most of the spectator participants seem delighted by the performance based on their facial expressions indicating excitement or delight. However, this particular man framed along with Williams and the musician has - even while clapping along - a blank, expressionless face initially. After a few moments of singing and wiggling before the bass player, Williams begins to accent certain words

with a half-squat in the midst of her intensified wiggle and in the process slightly thrust her backside toward the male spectator in the frame. At once, we see a large smile spread across his previously blank face to indicate pleasure. His pleasure might have been building all along, but it was the accent of her Williams' body, that brought the visible evidence of his delight.

This type of pleasure can be interpreted through lenses of the *performance principal* together with the *work principal*. McKenzie's explicates the performance principal as theorized by Herbert Marcuse in 1955 to mean that people do not only work to fulfill their own direct need, but while working act out pre-established functions that yield satisfaction. This framework is compatible with the *work principal* which suggests, "that primary pleasure is sought by efficient use of the central nervous system for the performance of well-integrated ego-functions" and "the need of human beings for pleasure afforded by effective integration of the neuromuscular and intellection functions... not primarily displaced or sublimated sensual pleasure."[106] The mastery of any instrument requires skilled technical ability but this fact is often ignored in discussions of folk vocalists that do not require classical training in the European tradition. Vocalists who sing soul and improvised music are not only skilled technicians but also intuitive musicians who, "in the moment of performance, the primary subject of their own invention, create new ways to play (with) the flexible, stretchable voice instrument. [107] A demonstration of pleasure derived through the mastery of a skill, more specifically, the instrument that is one's voice, is achieved by Marion Williams who seemed to sing for sport. With her smiles, smirks, and laughter she conveyed immense satisfaction or pleasure from the

[106] Griffin, "When Malindy Sings."

[107] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 58.

physical, cognitive, intuitive act of playing/being a musician/instrument and working one's own body.

It is clear that Marion Williams is not only a singer of the gospel, as she dances, moves, struts, wiggles and plays, she is a skilled performer who understands how to generate pleasure and allure from a body that is large, female, and covered in dark brown skin. Her movements are rhythmic and repetitive as she uses her entire body to convey the main subtext of her *Hootenanny* performance: this woman enjoys her own body and takes pleasure in her own show. In the case of Marion Williams, her performances were the result of her practicing spontaneity for many years and learning from antecedent practitioners within her religious community. Hers was a religious practice within and African American Pentecostal church network that privileged embodied demonstrations of faith above verbal confessions.

Movement Over Mortality

The context for Marion Williams' demonstrations of pleasure was not limited to her personal life of gender-specific precarity, nor the collective experiences of her group, but was also situated within a broader context of heightened mortality for US black-bodied people so that her incessant movement was in resistance to what Karla Holloway terms "black death."[108] Holloway suggests that "Instead of death and dying being unusual, untoward events, or despite being inevitable end-of-lifespan events, the cycles of our daily lives were so persistently interrupted by specters of death that we […] included it as an aspect of black cultural sensibility."[109] Holloway's work concerning Black expressive cultural forms, both sacred and

[108] Karla F. C. Holloway, *Passed On: African American Mourning Stories, a Memorial* (Duke University Press, 2002).

[109] Ives Hendrick, "Work and the Pleasure Principle," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* (1943): 311.

secular, is about heightened mortality or embedded with morbid or mournful subtexts. She defines what national crisis means for and among African Americans in contrast to other citizens: the anticipation of death and dying at a proportion that is greater than that of non-Black counterparts. She also addresses the fact that, "Black culture's stories of death and dying were inextricably linked to the ways in which the nation experienced, perceived, and represented African America,"[110] and these stories include those taking the form of song. Holloway then goes on to discuss how death and dying are addressed within Black communities and among Black people through dozens of examples that span every decade of the twentieth century across literature, film, visual arts, music, and religious ritual.

Black churches were the site of funerals and "funeralizing" rituals, and the text or subtext of death and dying constituted gospel music as a genre, so "Black death" was in many ways inextricable from sacred locations and sacred music forms. The diversity of such sacred expressions manifest along a performance spectrum or continuum. At one end of possibility are the morbid expressions and funeral rituals that take on a more Europeanist form and borrow from Puritan, Euro-Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian and other religious traditions and rituals that privilege stillness and eschew improvisation. At the other end of the spectrum are the more Africanist expressions that employ rituals of movement and improvisation with elements of ring-shout forms. This contrast of theme and delivery had been inherited from a musical tradition of spirituals, but the delivery of such spirituals were highly regulated in Black churches preferring more European styles as early as the 1840s.

While the scene of the funeral within many Black churches is often ineluctable from sacred music performances that signify heightened mortality, the different approaches and

[110] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent* (Duke University Press, 2006), 315.

delivery styles do not always require the sound of sorrow or the "sorrow song" genealogy. Between the 1940's and 1960s when gospel music developed as a commercial genre and widely recognized negro art form, the subjects of "death and dying" were central to gospel music thematically but through divergent deliveries, aesthetics and performance styles which would produce varying affective results. For example, songs about death and dying, including those centered on the death and dying of Jesus, might be delivered in a Baptist or Pentecostal church with spirited movement that was a type of sacred social dance.

Within this spectrum of religious expression including burial rituals, New Orleans funeral parades as an often cited example. Referencing this example, Holloway joins Sterling Stuckey, Samuel Floyd and Guthrie Ramsey in arguing that elements of the ring-shout have been retained in some forms of sacred and secular cultural expression. The well known funeral parades described by Joseph Roach and others often begins with a slow "dirge" from the church, and then once the group is a "respectable" distance from the edifice, the procession becomes a parade with boisterous music and celebratory dancing. A different version of this tradition that Holloway also references is a parade that starts right at the doors of the church without the slow dirge processional and without the need to create any "respectable" distance. Yet another and version of the funeral parade/procession along the spectrum of Black religious practice takes place within the actual church itself and involves dancing or "high stepping" as people circle around the sanitary to view the body with boisterous music and singing.

This latter version is practiced within Pentecostal religious traditions, and, despite having a history that is at least a century long evidenced by numerous early accounts, this version is not as well documented throughout the twentieth century as the public funeral parades that are public and viewable by non-members of a given church community. Most significant to the work of

Marion Williams, is that the Pentecostal "high stepping" dance practices took place *inside* of churches and this is an indication that practitioners understood the black dancing body as a continuation of the reverence and sanctity associated with the edifice. In fact, some interpretations of Pentecostal theology suggest that it was the dancing body that confirmed sanctification. In terms of funeral rituals in particular, Pentecostal practices were in direct opposition to mortality with more literal translations of biblical text surrounding the afterlife. In other words, transition to an afterlife that meant freedom from race and gender based injustice was worthy of immediate celebration. This boisterous approach to funerals within certain Pentecostal traditions is also applied to the historic condition of general heightened mortality for black-bodied practitioners and versions of this opposition to mortality through dance took place in Pentecostal churches multiple times per week. As previously iterated, Pentecostal practitioners did not originate this approach, which is an example of ring-shout Africanist retentions, but those singers and musicians were the culture bearers of such practices through the twentieth century.

Marion Williams embodied and sounded the Pentecostal approach to heightened mortality beginning with performances in that network of church spaces, and continuing with her recorded song repertoire that is mostly about preparing to die and the life-after. The dancing approach to funerals, and death and dying in general, was the overall Pentecostal mode of performance from which she developed her signature style. Williams' movement away from the mobility found in more Europeanist traditions is exemplified in her performances of the song "Packin' Up" which is lyrically a song about the anticipation of death:

> I am on my way to the New Jerusalem
> Where the sun will never go down
> Everyday I'm making preparations
> I'm packing up – getting ready to go
> Getting ready – getting ready to go
> Getting ready to go – I'm packing up, getting ready to go

Wiliams' approach to the condition of heightened mortality was - consistent with Pentecostal performance traditions, which was the repeated practice of moving through its inevitability by means of performance.

Contemporary Significance

Williams is a significant figure to popular culture because it was she in particular who helped to introduce and establish movement and vocal improvisation throughout mainstream entertainment in a way that came to signify "the Black church" through her work in theater, television, and concert performance transnationally during the earlier decades of her career. By 1993 this package of sound and movement had become a familiar trope represented as standard gospel music performance or "going to church" in film and even televisions commercials, but for many Black churches, then and now, the scene is a stark misrepresentation of their Black religious practice.

By the early 1990s the scene of an African American (often full-figured) woman gospel singer with a jubilant, rocking, and robed ensemble or choir had become a familiar trope within American popular culture. *Black Nativity* was the catalyst for a thirty-year history of popular depictions of the melismatic gospel vocalist or choir in connection with African descended American folk traditions. After *Black Nativity* toured in the US and Black community theater companies mounted productions across the country, the performance trope was firmly established with Tony Award winning musical theater productions and then moved to film and television. Examples include: *Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope* (1972)*, Your Arms Are Too Short to Box with God* (1976), which launched the career of Jennifer Holiday who had been recruited directly from a church choir, *Gospel at Colonus* (1983); signature songs in musical theater productions featuring Black woman lead vocals with a gospel choir style such as *Hair* (1968), and *Rent* (1996) ; in addition to films with key Black church representations of movement and

dance like *The Jerk* (1979), *The Blues Brothers* (1980), and *The Color Purple* (1985); as well as music videos for songs like Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" (1988), Madonna's "Like A Prayer" (1989), and MC Hammer's "You've Got to Pray" (1990).

This popularization would culminate in *Sister Act 2* (1993), which was a major motion picture with gospel music performance being central to the theme (rather than just in one church scene). The accompanying soundtrack consisted of four gospel songs couched between soul and R&B numbers. The release of this soundtrack and film starring Whoopi Goldberg which would go on to gross almost $200 in revenue worldwide. This commercial success marked the mainstream proliferation of jubilant gospel music images and types in the American imaginary in the United States and internationally that continue to circulate presently. Without coincidence, *Sister Act 2* was loosely based on the life of gospel musician and choir director Iris Stevenson who is, while otherwise not famous, a well-known practitioner within the very same Pentecostal denomination and network from which Marion Williams and Rosetta Tharpe emerged.

Also in December 1993, Aretha Franklin sang in tribute to Marion Williams during the Kennedy Honors ceremony. Franklin and Goldberg re-performed and represented on stage and in film respectively full-figured Black women from different eras who shared a very specific theology. In addition, they shared a history of participation in what Daphne Brooks refers to as "subterranean" practice space. Franklin and Goldberg performed before cameras that transmitted performances across the country and the world in a way that marked these gospel performances as "American" and Black. While Franklin, Stevenson, and Goldberg with the success of Sister Act 2 can trace their gospel music performances directly back to Marion Williams on some level, Williams had remained uncelebrated and unnamed throughout most of her career until 1993, the year before her death. The anonymity that marked most of her career, and the precarity of her life

chances in relation to her identity off-stage, were not largely effected by the widespread appropriation of her style. These mainstream images and sounds of African descended religious performers are marked by danceable rhythms, body movements, and a level of commercially driven showmanship that is not easily readable as social or political resistance. However, I contend that certain gospel music performance styles now widely accepted in terms of entertainment value were once, for Marion Williams and potentially others, defiant moves away from Black woman servitude and the obligation to care.

While the Kennedy Center Honors scene involves up-tempo gospel music, a group of Black bodies moving rigorously, and a full-figured female lead singer to complete the tributary reference to Marion Willliams' style, missing from the re-performance was the precarity that Marion Williams herself would have embodied in her life time. Williams was as an undereducated life-long performer who was never rich, hardly mainstream, and lived in economic uncertainty for most of her life. Also missing from the scene was the heightened mortality of "Black death and dying"[111] that would have been common and shared among congregants and participating gospel music listeners of African descent during the early-to-mid twentieth century.

My analysis of Williams' performances in theaters, churches, concert halls before the peak of her career, as well as performances broadcast on television during and afterwards, leads to my assertion that her moving body was in direct conversation with heightened mortality and the precarious service work that she and other Black women performed and that she herself would have continued to perform without her musical career. This does not preclude the possibility that her indifference was also often staged in the interest of a good show toward gain

[111] Holloway, *Passed On*, 6.

financially or otherwise. Her indifference to audience, theatrical form, concert hall decorum, and physical propriety, are rooted in the both the inevitable precarity of her life conditions and her chosen theological framework for pleasure. To be clear, I am avoiding any argument that her indifference was any more "authentic" or genuine than the staged versions that later signify upon her trendsetting showiness. I am suggesting that independent of audience, space or place, Williams' incessant movement and indifference to social regulation for women' bodies was as consistent as the conditions of her race, gender, appearance, and recurring poverty as experienced in her lifetime, and as consistent as the religious community that embraced her before, during and after the peak of her career.

Marion Williams did not enact indifference or resist subjugation alone. In addition to her insistence on collaborative and collective performance throughout most of her career, she performed traditions that she had inherited from antecedents, and she graciously passed on her version of such traditions to her musical offspring. Williams' work is situated along a continuum of Negro and Black musical performers who resisted structures of service through sacred musical performance. Some of these performers include the Fisk Jubilee Quartet, Golden Gate Quartet, Rosetta Tharpe, and Mahalia Jackson.

Chapter Two

Service and Circulation

Throughout the twentieth century, the commercially distributed sacred music of African descended folk has often functioned in service to an authority or an idea, which might include God, nation, an institution, or a social movement. The music also functioned in service to popular culture with music performed solely to support the main production - but not featured as the primary attraction. The recurring performance structures that foreground religious context or civic duty, and simultaneously background or devalue cultural specificity toward mass appeal, are what qualify certain musical forms as *service music.* The definition of service music for this study is music that functions in support of dominant forms, ideas, or institutions in ways that might diminish any cultural or artistic relevance beyond that support function. Service music is also qualified by the labor of individual performers who frequently perform in ways that parallel feminized service workers expected to fill service roles based on body type, and who often create and conceive without attribution. Building upon the discussion of feminized and racialized labor in chapter one, *backgrounding* is the term chosen here to describe the feminizing process of modifying a musical form to function explicitly in a service to another form, idea, or institution. Backgrounding is also the process that repositions a performer away from cultural participation and reforming it to fit into a role of musical service. This study suggests that each of these modes not only reinscribed misguided notions that service was a function inherent to sacred music of the African descended, but both modes also gendered the African descended forms feminine, and

functioned as vehicles to feminize African descended performers and their labor. Still, folk spiritual and gospel music singers and musicians found ways to counter expectations and suggestions that they and the form *only* functioned in subordination to either popular appeal or religious propriety.

Toward the realization of their own pleasure and possession, certain well-traveled African descended performers strategically situated their performances in an existing framework of racialized service in order to counteract, contest, or elude race-based restrictions. They accomplished this in many instances by performing in conversation with commercially recorded and packaged versions of themselves. Certain sacred music performers delivered sounds and movements transnationally to create and reclaim the value of their cultural expressions independent of popular appeal, commercial value, or "Eurological"[1] religious doctrine while simultaneously helping to build industries of live and recorded entertainment. In some cases, performers foregrounded culturally specific religious practice through folk spirituals and gospel music as religious service or service to the country, while in other cases performers *backgrounded* their own culturally derived sounds and practices in service to popular and transnational entertainment. This analysis suggests neither that each tactic was fully corrective nor that results were permanent. This is to say that, despite the efforts of practitioners, cultural context did not always stay in the foreground, and popular reformed versions at the expense of cultural meaning did not always render commercial success. Each performer at different points in their careers, while not always consistently and not always with lasting results, worked against the subordination associated with sacred music performance that black-bodied singers and

[1] Olly Wilson, "The Significance of the Relationship between Afro-American Music and West African Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* (1974).

musicians rendered. These African descended artists embraced heightened mobility as well as new technologies for distributing musical content in order to generate and perform pleasure and possession through sacred music forms that listeners consumed as popular culture. They often worked to foreground religious context in conversation with and in contestation of widely circulating images and sounds, including their own, that backgrounded folk forms.

The sacred folk music practices of African descended U.S. Americans flourished and expanded throughout the twentieth century in a manner similar to that of related secular forms. From the start of the century as recording industries were emerging, the circulation of African descended religious musics increased as practitioners moved from spaces of cultural participation to commercial presentation. Musical practices extended from the realm of expressive folk culture within communities of the African descended, to the realm of popular entertainment across the U.S. and abroad. The vehicles for expansion across intra-ethnic social spaces as well as regional and continental geographies were commerce driven technologies including phonographs, radio, television, and film with content disseminated internationally. This expansion process was highly racialized, and new musical genre categories often mirrored social, legal, and mobility limitations for African descended performers. Emerging recording industries often worked to reinscribe and create conditions of labor inequality and total exclusion for black-bodied performers.

The exemplary performers of this study include: the Fisk University Jubilee Quartet including Fisk professor John W. Work II, the vocalist who led the group as they performed and recorded songs as early as 1909 that recovered the religious significance of certain Jubilee-styled songs that minstrel performers had worked to destroy; Orlandus Wilson and Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet who came together in the 1930s and toured three continents including cities in India and

Israel and in the late 1950s; and Mahalia Jackson, who first introduced much of the world to the term "gospel music" as a recognized genre and had the top selling record in Denmark in 1951. These singers and musicians delivered live performances and recordings that demonstrated mastery of their own bodies, playfulness, social consciousness, and conceptions of self to counter mass-produced versions of themselves. Each performer worked in conversation with pre-existing notions of service surrounding the sacred music of African descended people as well as notions of service often conjured at the sight and sound of black bodies or black female bodies.

The Labor of Jubilee

The original Fisk singers of the 1870s rendered service to the university providing affective vocal music through the physical labor of their own bodies without the benefit of wages or direct compensation. While literature surrounding original Fisk singers often places emphasis on the financial benefit to the university, the aesthetic value of the voices, or the usefulness of the form to abolitionists, there has been less critical attention to the labor conditions endured by the singers themselves. The explicit function of the tours was to raise money for Fisk University and while the singers' voices and bodies were inextricable from the primary function of generating revenue, the singers were not direct agents or beneficiaries of their labor. Available narratives suggest that the singers did not arrange or negotiate their own conditions for labor or location, and were most often expected to perform as unnamed individuals without payment. One explanation suggests that Fisk singers were indebted to the university and that those who displayed the most talent and "whose gift of song had been developed incidentally" from the large choir were chosen "to save in the time of its necessity, the institution that had sheltered and

instructed them[2]" after emancipation. According to this explanation of expected service, the singers were chosen by the university treasurer, George White, who had no formal music training, but eventually became the first Fisk Jubilee director after he began his affiliation with Fisk University as a volunteer choir leader while employed in local city government.[3]

That published explanation of indebtedness and the selection process is in conflict with evidence suggesting that those who travelled for the longest European Fisk tours, a series that began in 1872, included those who were not Fisk students or affiliated in any way. There were fifteen students selected to sing for the second round of fundraising that started fall of that year, but when the Fisk organizers decided to cut the number down to "eleven of the best singers," they decided to "return the others to their homes,"[4] which suggests that they were not university students who would return to classes. By 1874 at least one singer not affiliated with Fisk university, "or any university,"[5] was chosen to tour. Frederick Loudin was brought from Memphis where he was a church musician to Nashville for rehearsals before the 1875 tour and performed as a Fisk Jubilee lead soloist for three years.[6] It is not clear if Loudin received direct compensation for his labor, and it is possible that he, too, was expected to perform in exchange for shelter and the international travel experience. Certainly Loudin's presence draws attention to

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[2] Gustavus D. Pike, *The Jubilee Singers, and Their Campaign for Twenty Thousand Dollars* (London,: Hodder and Stoughton, 1873).

[3] Ibid., vii.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Doug Seroff, "'A Voice in the Wilderness': The Fisk Jubilee Singers' Civil Rights Tours of 1879-1882," *Popular Music and Society* 25, no. 1-2 (2001).

[6] Ibid.

the skill that singers brought from years of cultural practice independent from White's instruction. Loudin's presence also disrupts the narrative that George White's training was responsible for the expert Jubilee sound, and that students were therefore indebted to the university for that training. In this light, the labor conditions for black-bodied Fisk performers who were transported across the Atlantic in order to yield financial benefit for the university, were not completely divorced from the labor conditions that often prevailed for performers during slavery only seven years before the famous tours. Toward the altruistic goal of building institutions "for the education of the Freedmen," one representative of the American Missionary Association stated this it was their "purpose to monopolize the Jubilee Singers' business" if George White would teach students "how to sing their old slave songs in the best possible manner."[7] This ambition brought great success to the institution, but absent from the statement is how singers themselves might benefit aside from the education being offered to them and all other Fisk students, including those who did not render performance labor. The practice of Fisk sacred music singers rendering musical acts that generated revenue for the institution or toward a noble cause, but not for the individuals, set an early precedent and continued expectation for religious folk music as service music.

Beyond possibilities for wage injustice, historic Fisk Jubilee performances qualified as service music because of the structure of performances, along with the process of modifying forms to fit service expectations. Primarily this is the case because the repertoire was comprised of modified folk songs that were reformed, or "refined," toward a more commercially appealing presentation. The antecedent folk songs and performance styles from which Jubilee songs were

[7] Ibid. p.4

derived, were backgrounded in service to a new form that was more amenable to concert presentation rather than community participation. Still, the singers used the framework of service in order to foreground their religious convictions in ways that asserted humanity. This demonstration of humanity through religious service, which was distinct from the physical labor otherwise assigned to black bodied non-citizens historically deemed soulless and incapable of faith, was one way that Fisk performers contributed to discourse surrounding their own civil liberties and human rights. Even while Fisk singers backgrounded folk customs toward a more European sacred music tradition, religious service was the vehicle through which singers could evidence the presence of souls housed within black bodies. Like their musical antecedents, Jubilee Quartet also performed the "refined"[8] religious folk music of African descended people in the form of modified spirituals. During the initial tours from the 1870s, Fisk Jubilee Singers had delivered the first US American musical form to circulate internationally and commercially, and the subsequent singers might have expected similar or greater circulation for their recorded renditions but with slightly modified labor conditions.

Toward the reclamation of a Jubilee legacy, Fisk Quartet recordings worked to repossess the Jubilee name as well as the cultural, aesthetic, and sacred space that the name signified. There is wide agreement that Negro spirituals as performed and commercialized through the initial Fisk Jubilee tours signify the "beginnings of black music's entry into the public domain"

[8] Alain Locke writes that "refined secularization" should not "rob" spirituals of religious "heritage" in his article *The Negro Spirituals* in *The new Negro: readings on race, representation, and African American culture, 1892-1938* edited by Henry Louis Gates, and Gene Andrew Jarrett.

and "popular culture industries"[9] so that, "the advent of black spirituals into the realm of popular culture seemingly signaled the evisceration of that form's historical and political meaning"[10] as early as 1871. Working to counter such evisceration, twentieth century Fisk singers created some of the earliest sound recordings of Black performance. Early recordings amplify the labor conditions for sacred music performers, and also sound alternatives for interpreting performances beyond the "original" narrative. The second wave of Fisk singers, worked to help to resituate the music beyond the context of service that had been tethered to the legacy of the original singers. Their performances and recordings functioned to counter the artistic and political evisceration of the Jubilee style and form. In addition, Fisk Jubilee Quartet singers shifted the structure of the performance exchange in ways that allowed them to benefit directly from their performance labor including recorded versions of themselves.

The timing of the recordings is significant because the Fisk Quartet started recording about five years after W.E.B. Du Bois published that the Fisk Jubilee legacy had been co-opted "by straggling quartettes" and that "caricature has sought again to spoil the quaint beauty of the music, and has filled the air with many debased melodies which vulgar ears scarce know from the real."[11] The new group of singers sanctioned by Fisk University worked to re-establish the performance tradition and legacy of the original singers. Even so, the efforts of the Fisk Quartet alongside the permeation of spirituals throughout the emerging recording industry has been in

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[9] Paul Gilroy, 'Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the challenge of A Changing Same' 119

[10] Brooks, Daphne. *Bodies in Dissent*. Duke University Press, 2006., 299

[11] W. E. B. Du Bois and Henry Louis Gates, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Bantam classic ed., A Bantam Classic (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 119.

want of critical attention. One cause for this neglect in critical literature thus far is that scholars and archivists have only recently retrieved, cataloged, and digitized the earliest surviving recordings. Another possibility for disinterest overall might be the failure of Fisk Jubilee Quartet to fully represent the compelling service narrative that had defined the original singers, although that same narrative of song-service to save an institution would be represented repeatedly throughout the twentieth century (e.g. *Sister Act 2*).

One of the Fisk Quartet strategies for shifting the narrative away from the legendary song-service toward cultural expression with greater autonomy, was the incorporation of Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poetry into live performances and eventually sound recordings as well. Having Dunbar's work included in the published program shifted the degree to which Negro authorship could be recognized. In addition, performing Dunbar's work as recitations and readings at concerts introduced narratives that conveyed cultural value for the songs before and beyond the concert presentations. In one instance, the Fisk singers were announced to perform three of Dunbar's works that were interwoven among eleven songs. A *New York Times* weekly concert listing published in March 1910 listed the title and composer for each selection that Fisk would perform at a concert later that week.[12] The program included six songs that were recorded in their first series of recording sessions for Victor Record company completed about sixty days before the concert, five additional songs, and the Dunbar poetry. Of the eleven songs, only one was attributed to a specific Negro writer, group leader J.W. Work, with all other spirituals labeled "negro folk song" in the absence of specific attribution, and four songs were attributed to other writers. The Dunbar titles were also attributed to him by name in each instance and this inclusion

[12] "Concerts of the Week," *New York Times*, 1910/03/13/ 1910.

helped to foreground Negro authorship in a way that acknowledged Negro creative labor in a way that the label "negro folk song" did not. In addition, the Dunbar pieces they chose-- "When Melindy Sings," "The Old Chunes," and "The Party"--all functioned to shift the narrative of Negro musical song performance away from the Jubilee service paradigm. Together, the poems presented cultural context and value for Negro folk music independent from white audiences, and also outside of the framework of song-service labor.

Countering Evisceration

The lasting fame of the original Fisk singers was not necessarily a solid foundation upon which new Fisk singers might construct a platform against evisceration. The performances of the original singers had been captured with some derision in printed accounts while the residual performance tradition had been muddied by minstrel show mockeries and widespread imitation that was too often inexpert. Minstrel performance had grown in popularity and unskilled jubilee-styled imitation groups had emerged in response to early Fisk success, while both forms worked in opposition to the initial Fisk performance tradition. Minstrel performance and imitation groups denigrated the initial Jubilee form, content, and function while invoking the Jubilee name. Fisk Jubilee Quartet faced the challenge of being compared to new performance traditions that undermined the original Jubilee style and form. Although the official group of Fisk singers had disbanded by 1880, unsanctioned groups took advantage of Jubilee fame and toured perfidiously under that very name, or variations of the name in US and Europe through the early 1900s. This homage to the Fisk singers not only evidences the residual symbolic pertinence of their historic accomplishments, but it also marks how their influence spurred an entirely new performance tradition that prevailed as the most highly regarded African American expressive culture and a symbol of Negro achievement for decades.

The historic events surrounding the acclaim of the Fisk singers in the 1870s circulated heavily through the early 1900s as biographical fact, memory, and post memory, through newspapers, manuscripts, sheet music, and live performance drawing directly from the Jubilee repertoire. In one example surrounding a California performance in 1890 a writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* alludes to the possibility of identity theft when detailing an "interesting"[13] performance where the singers listed in the program were not actually present, but a group with entirely different names showed up to sing. Still the reviewer praises the vocal ability of those who performed and also reiterates the monumental success of the 1870s European and US tours to perpetuate the phantasm surrounding that historic legendary ascension. It is quite possible that the reviewer had no standard for highly skilled Negro performance by which to compare the singers and that the singers were some of the unskilled imitations of which Du Bois would later write. It is possible that, independent of technical ability or formal delivery, she praised the singers on the grounds of their historic association. Widely famed success began well before the first European tours that yielded a $150,000 profit, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers had already achieved unprecedented acclaim in the US. One can deduce that upon their return from the Europe, the ethos surrounding their performance only compounded and periodicals from those subsequent decades reflect the continued awareness of Fisk Jubilee triumphs at home and abroad. The reverberation of Fisk Jubilee success, which has now lasted for more than a century, was certainly most palpable in the immediate decades following the iconic tours and widespread fame.

[13] "Fisk Jubilee Singers," *San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*, 1890/02/21/ 1890.

Concurrent, however, with the residue of Fisk Jubilee success was the unprecedented anti-black theatrical and cultural violence within the realm of popular performance following their widespread success. Alongside the anti-black sentiment within performance venues was the expansion of anti-black physical violence through US lynching culture. In the decades following the never-before-witnessed transnational success of Fisk singers anti-Black violence in the US reached never-before-witnessed heights. Koritha Mitchell theorizes that public knowledge of black achievement "attracts"[14] anti-Black violence with evidence drawn from W.E.B Dubois' *Crisis* magazine publications as well as creative texts by Black women dramatists. Mitchell interprets certain cultural expressions by African descended people during the late 19th century to mean that they "understood lynching as a white response to their success"[15] toward a reconsideration that Black expressive culture corresponding to high achievement is the *cause* of anti-black sentiment rather than the result lest Black cultural production be wholly reduced to the realm of the reactionary or exclusively understood as a form of resistance.

Evidence for the anti-black backlash of Fisk Jubilee success can be found in the vitriolic content of minstrel "coon" songs that were the result of Jubilee styled spirituals being "caricatured on the minstrel stage."[16] Those coon songs circulating as sheet music and through performance for white audiences would eventually become a key component to the early recording industry with only about fifteen years separating the final tours of the original Fisk

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[14] Koritha Mitchell, *Living with Lynching : African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*, The New Black Studies Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 120.

[15] Ibid

[16] Du Bois and Gates, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

group and the emergence of recording technology. As new technologies enabled new opportunities for Black cultural expression and widened appreciation for Negro aesthetics, white supremacists responded "violently to Black success and self affirmation"[17] alongside efforts to reinscribe Black subservience. Fisk Quartet recordings in the context of widespread anti-black sentiment that lingered after the Civil War, but also worked to counter anti-black "coon" sound recordings, sheet music, and mass-produced derogatory images that circulated transnationally with the turn of the century. Between 1894 and 1905 from Victor and Columbia phonograph companies there were over 200 recordings with "coon" or "darkie" in the title, more than thirty with "nigger" in the title, at least another fifty ridiculing "Negro" events like weddings and funerals through songs and dialog and scores more with benign titles but malignant anti-Negro content.[18] While most recordings had generic titles like "Little Alabama Coon" (1899) and "A Big Fat Coon" (1901), some titles directly addressed citizenship and surrounding political rights like "The Patriotic Coon" (1899), "When a Coon Sits in the Presidential Chair" (1899), and "Every Race Has a Flag but the Coon" (1900) demonstrating that such performances were not divorced from the social and political stakes of racial inequality. Various artists from well-known vaudeville performers to the Metropolitan Orchestra recorded this "coon" work for companies including Victor (which would later become RCA) and Columbia (which would later become Sony Music), and the recording trend didn't completely fade until 1930.[19]

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[17] Mitchell, *Living with Lynching : African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*, 180.

[18] Many more qualified as "coon" songs without coon or darkie in the title so the actual; number far exceeds 250.

[19] *Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings*, compiled by Ted Fagan and William R. Moran ; edited by Sam Brylawski. Regents of the University of California.

Following the success of original Fisk singers, minstrel performance with new song lyrics and comedic routines directly "mocked"[20] Jubilee singers (those from Fisk and elsewhere) as well as Black religious practices. Clear examples of early recordings with direct musical and lyrical references to Jubilee styled spirituals with derision include "A Coon Wedding in Southern Georgia" (1900) and the recording "A Characteristic Negro Medley" which was "recorded by white quartets on Edison and Columbia"[21] in 1902.[22] The opening dialog in the wedding song gives way to a ridiculous "coon" version of "Hammering in my soul" which was a song in the Fisk Jubilee repertoire. In the song "Negro Medley" white performers sing and speak in a contrived Negro dialog and faux vocality with castigating lyrics to mimic African Descended worshippers singing a spiritual. In both cases the function of the recordings are an attempt to reframe and deform Negro worship practices as nonsensical and comedic to manifest the idea (for white audiences) that a Negro having the humanity required to possess a soul and attain salvation is laughable.

The comedic turn worked toward the errant conclusion by white supremacists that the idea of Negros having civil liberties, which were reserved for God-fearing white men, was equally absurd. Due to the religious content of this and other songs that ridiculed Jubilee performance styles it is important to consider the fact that anti-Black sentiment aimed at successful jubilee performance was concurrently aimed at Black religious practice as a way to

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[20] Brooks, Daphne. *Bodies in Dissent*. Duke University Press, 2006., 283

[21] Ibid.

[22] Brooks, Tim. 2000. ""might Take One Disc of This Trash as a Novelty": Early Recordings by the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Popularization of "negro Folk Music."" *American Music* 18 (3). University of Illinois Press: 278–316. doi:10.2307/3052431.

undermine Negro citizenship. These social and political stakes permeated Black religious performance as well as subsequent ridicule so that Jubilee songs were situated at the intersection of race, religion, rights, and the origins of recorded popular music packaged for mass consumption.

By 1903 Victor Record Company had already declared plans to ensure a "phonograph in every home"[23] and the nickel machines placed in various eating establishments enabled a wide audience for recordings outside of the home before residential saturation was accomplished.[24] In the newspaper advertisements from Victor and Edison through 1915 "coon" songs comprised more than ten percent of the promoted phonograph catalogue. The recorded sounds emanating from talking machines and moving across residential and social spaces were very likely to include anti-Black minstrel performances of deformed Negro spirituals.[25] It is quite plausible that the sounds created to debase spirituals that emanated from "talking machines" to flood houses, college residences, and leisure areas then out of windows and into neighborhoods were the only sonic encounters that many had with the form in the early twentieth century. The disproportionate presence of "coon" music throughout early recording company catalogs was the soundscape that helped listeners imagine warped versions of Negro personhood. Fisk Jubiless

[23] Allan Sutton, *A Phonograph in Every Home : The Evolution of the American Recording Industry, 1900-19* (Denver, Colo.: Mainspring Press, 2010).

[24] Ibid

[25] The unconfined sound from phonographs from houses into neighborhoods was the cause of local restrictive noise ordinances in some cities. See a mapping of noise complaints in Thompson, Emily. "Making Noise in The Roaring' Twenties." *The Public Historian* 37, no. 4 (2015): 91-110; and more discussion in Radovac, Lilian. "The" War on Noise": Sound in Space in La Guardia's New York." *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2011): 733-760.

Quartet produced some of the earliest recorded sound that functioned to counter the imagined Negro presence.

Especially significant for this study are the more than fifty songs, in addition to those aforementioned, with a title referencing Black religious performance and practice at "camp meetings" in particular recorded as early as 1896. Fisk Jubilee Quartet recorded their own camp meeting song, "Great camp Meeting," in 1909 with Victor, and again with Columbia in 1916, to constitute the end of the era for songs with camp meeting in the actual title. Although the Fisk song was not newly written, the recorded version of the spiritual functioned as a sonic repossession of the space that original singers, anonymous songwriters, and scores of culture bearers had claimed for sacred Negro musical expression long ago. Fisk singers mounted the tattered vessel of Jubilee and embraced recording technology to infuse its sails with fresh wind. Their recordings of "Great Camp Meeting" worked to assert the possibility that Negro musical expression could be simultaneously sacred, valued as vernacular practice and heritage, worthy of high regard among social elites, and fit for popular consumption. The absence of new camp meeting recordings and the slow disappearance of new coon recordings after Fisk began recording, along with continued Fisk recordings and new world tours over the next decade, might give some indication that Fisk successfully repossessed the space that their musical ancestors had claimed for sacred Negro musicality.

Sounding Repossession

The 1909 Fisk recording of "Great Camp Meeting" delivered three different classifications of Negro spirituals in a single rendition that worked to reclaim religious folk practices across the performance spaces of religious folk practices, serious concert music, and popular music entertainment, while it also sounded a sustained commitment to pursuing

equalities promised through abolition. Several decades after the recording, ethnomusicologist John W. Work III (the son of Fisk Quartet leader Work II) described three types of spirituals determined by form and delivery styles that sometimes overlap. The three types he offered are, "the call and response chant; the slow, sustained, long-phrase melody; and the syncopated, segmented melody," with "Great Camp Meeting" listed in the 'call and response' category. Work III explicates that 'call and response' is the form for "the largest number of spirituals" but the "rapid tempo" characteristic of songs in this group are also common to those classified as 'syncopated and segmented.' The songs he listed as examples in each category reveal that in many cases 'call and response' songs allow for more improvisation by a lead soloist whereas the 'syncopated and segmented' songs without lead vocalists are more conducive to dance with rhythms that encourage bodily movement. Songs in the 'syncopated and segmented' form are more likely to have short phrases with much repetition, rather than complete sentences, and this type of song is driven by the rhythm of this repetition instead of being driven by lead vocals.

These distinctions in musical form and delivery were culturally relevant because they correlated to distinctions in social and religious folk practices as well as doctrine and dogma that marked divisions between Protestant denominations in the US during the period. Methodists historically had been largely responsible for incorporating African descended people and musical practices into Camp Meetings and also weekly services, but by 1900 Methodists churches had become more conservative and more Puritan in worship styles. This conservative shift for worship, that some scholars interpret as "a shift toward modernism"[26] also included *African* Methodist organizations around the turn of the century that essentially outlawed the performance

[26] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music : Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*.

of either ‘syncopated and segmented’ tunes that encouraged dance, or ‘call and response’ songs that encouraged improvisation. In contrast, many Baptist organizations led by African descended clergy maintained the ‘call and response’ improvisation tradition as long as it was ‘slow and sustained,’ which was often called “lining out,” but discouraged the ‘syncopated and segmented’ traditions that encouraged dance. The widespread discontent with this shift in worship codes by those committed to sacred dance practices with syncopated music was enough to spur a whole new religious movement: Pentecostalism. Although rhythmic worship practices themselves were not new, denominations that were explicitly founded on theology that encouraged embodied worship practices including dance with ‘syncopated and segmented’ melodies began to spring up in 1907 and would became the fastest growing organizations during the Great Migration and over the next century. The denominational distinctions had correlations to intra-ethnic social stratifications. At one end of the spectrum, leaders and clergy of African Methodist organizations tended to be highly educated men with longer histories of being Freedmen and those organizations often had larger and older churches properties with a higher concentration of professionals among the congregation. At the other end of the spectrum, leaders and clergy of Pentecostal organizations were more likely to have no formal education, have shorter histories as Freedmen, more likely to have “Store-front” churches in rented spaces, more likely to have women in leadership roles, and more likely to have share-croppers and former sharecroppers among the congregation. Negro Baptist organizations were more in the middle of this spectrum, but during the first half of the twentieth century often announced their disassociation from Pentecostals and disavowed rhythmic worship practices. These differences in preferred worship practices were methods for sounding doctrine, dogma, and identity distinctions for African descend worshippers.

John W. Work II and other Quartet members performed and? recorded a repossession of all forms and delivery styles of spirituals to counter the way that denominations had constructed limitations and a hierarchy around spirituals to correlate with their respective social and doctrinal distinctions. The Fisk Quartet's commitment to the entire array of spiritual types is evident when considering the ten songs in the first series of recordings and the subsequent concert performance program. Even more 'miraculous' considering the social and religious context of denominational distinctions, is that Fisk Jubilee singers could appeal to an array of sensibilities with a single recording of "Great Camp Meeting." The version they recorded in 1909 alternates between 'slow and sustained' and 'syncopated and segmented' with each section of the song. This oscillation was more than an abstract aesthetic choice. It was a refusal by Fisk singers to disavow 'syncopated and segmented' worship practices that encouraged dance, and also a refusal to choose sides in a denominational contest over what should be considered sacred music. Although spirituals in their modified concert form had become the standard for more conservative Negro churches if they were to be performed at all - some Negro churches of the era limited music to classical compositions by European composers - Work II and the Fisk Quartet singers embraced all forms of spirituals including those that sounded folk traditions.[27] During the sections of the song with 'slow and sustained' delivery, the singers chorused long drawn-out phrases like "(going to) pray and never tire" in a way that sounded determination and willful persistence. In contrast to the rigorous verses driven by rhythm to suggest that continued movement was propelled by physical momentum of bodies, the 'slow and sustained' sections announce the deliberate and resolute process of resistance. In a performance that requires stamina for both

[27] See Eileen Southern for more on classical music being the standard in certain Negro churches as early as the 1850s.

rigorous pace and also sustained vocal exertion, Work II and the Fisk Quartet perform a combination of transcendence and resistance in conjunction with language that suggests the same.

The title of the song is drawn form the song's repeated phrase, "there's a great camp meeting in the promise land" and this line suggests a departure from earlier meanings that understood "promise(d) land" as a metaphor for post-emancipation America, or even northern states where slavery had been abolished in varying degrees. John W. Work II and the Fisk singers had the lived experience of post-emancipation racial injustice and in their recorded version, "promise land" is more likely to have meant a state of freedom that was not defined or confined by geographic states, or even federal laws stated without enforcement.[28] Work and the rest of the Quartet had not only witnessed the failure of promised freedom that had been attached to either physical land regions or legislative procedure during the reconstruction era, but they had also witnessed the reversal of certain civil liberties for their race. Their rendition of "Great Camp Meeting" situated the promised land as both a state of transcendence accomplished through folk religious practice, and the signifier for discontent with their current conditions. Like much of gospel music that would follow, references to heaven, the promised land, or better circumstances generally, functioned to mark dissatisfaction with present conditions without making that dissatisfaction the actual subject of the expression. Interpreting the recording through this vernacular performance method of "signifying" the song can also be understood as a response to other performances in circulation. Through indirect address, the Fisk "Great Camp Meeting" recordings were in direct conversation with a trend of camp meeting songs, a subset of the

[28] Here I am thinking of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 that had limited effect in practice.

"coon" category, that had circulated as sheet music, private and public performances, and ultimately early coon recordings.

The most popular of these camp meeting songs during that period was an instrumental tune with a ragtime (quarter-note:eighth-note:quarter:note) structure fit for social dancing. The tune was titled "Georgia Camp-meeting," and the cover art text describes the music as "a characteristic march which can be effectively used as a two-step polka or cake walk" (*Cake-walk ou Polka-Marche caracteristique* on the Paris version). It was first recorded in 1897 (the same year as its printed sheet music copyright) and then recorded at least eighteen more times by eleven different artists including well known vaudeville stars across five different record companies before 1910. In addition, the tune was widely performed in social spaces and became a ragtime standard still widely performed currently. Although it was not the first camp-meeting song recorded of its group, "A Georgia Camp Meeting" is most symptomatic of the disjuncture between religious practices among African descended people of the era and the sound and practices that composers *imagined* for them in a process of racialization. The original published sheet music clarifies that the tune has nothing to do with an actual camp-meeting with a disclaimer that reads: "This March was not intended to be a part of the Religious Exercises 'At a Georgia Camp meeting' but when the young folks got together they felt as if they needed some amusement. A Cake Walk was suggested, and held in a quiet place near by - hence the Music"[29] However, there is no available evidence that the disclaimer was printed on future version of sheet music or on the artwork for recorded versions. Composed without lyrics, only the title and sheet

[29]Edward Young Clarke, "Waves of Religion Sweep over People at Far Famed Georgia Camp-Meeting: at a Georgia Campmeeting March. The Riot of Love. Practically All Denominations. What Is a Camp Meeting? Many Cottages Rebuilt. Services and Leaders," *The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945)*, 1906/10/07/ 1906.

music cover art for "Georgia Camp meeting" evidence the imagined social spaces of the African descended associated with the music. The sheet music was distributed internationally with at least one version distributed by a publisher in London and another in Paris (1902) each with distinct cover art with exaggerated depictions of Negros with a religious scene in the background. The cover art, title, and the music itself worked to racialize camp-meetings in order to market otherness (Blackness) and relegate African descended practitioners to the realm of amusement. The cover art worked to eviscerate the significance of religious tradition, cultural practices, and any value for and among African descended people beyond popular consumption.

Long before the systems for international distribution of "canned" musical recordings were developed, sheet music with intricate cover art circulated transnationally for popular consumption with local live instrumental performance. Concurrent with the transnational circulation of musical and dance practices derived from Black performance traditions, was the anti-black derision for African descended performers circulating as sheet music cover art. Imitative versions of Negro performance networked through London and Paris in the form of sheet music and subsequent amateur and professional performances. For example, numerous versions of the cover art for "Georgia Camp Meeting" printed in various countries and languages before 1905 depict African descended religious practitioners dancing the cake-walk during a sacred event. Cakewalk and ragtime tunes for social dancing were quite popular during the era, and there is some evidence that certain congregations in "rural sections" who prohibited secular music held social dances where congregants "marched" to sacred music.[30] Still, they would not have been widely performed *during* religious camp meetings held by the African descended and

[30] John W. Work, *American Negro Songs* (New York,: Howell, 1940), 18.

the cover art depiction is a gross misrepresentation.[31] An early version of the self-published sheet music distributed in United States had cover art with a vivid two-color drawing of a group of eight Negros with pronounced white lips dancing in a clearing in the woods wearing fine garments, decorative hats and accessories. One figure, the only who seems to look directly at the reader with oversized saucer eyes and a clown-white mouth, wears a clergy collar, a top hat, and holds an oversized Bible.

The version printed and distributed from London also has artwork depicting a scene in a clearing in the woods. In that version, the women do not wear hats, although most of the men are wearing top hats, and the Negro facial features are less exaggerated with only two of the thirteen characters - the banjo player and the bald man - having prominent red lips. Those dancing are lined up in pairs rather than gathered in a cluster like the dancers in the United States version and adjacent to the dancers is a group of gamblers and a razor in the grass near one of them. In the upper left section of the drawing there is a circular inset depicting empty pews and a podium, which is also set in the woods to suggest that the revelers have just finished a religious service. For the Paris version there is one Negro couple in the foreground against a solid red background and a single Negro accordion player, perhaps a child, to the left of the couple. The three characters have red lips that frame delirious grins from oversized heads. The couple is dressed in wedding attire and the groom has one leg raised with knee bent as if he is about to break into a celebratory dance.

[31] To be clear, certain religious groups did in fact have sacred dance practices toward transcendence that took place during sacred events but they were not in the popular form of the Cakewalk.

This conflation of sacred tradition with popular social dance also worked to deteriorate religious significance so that even traditions deemed sacred by Negroes, were fully accessible for white consumption and therefore repositioned as profane. The cover art for Camp-meting, for example, errantly conflated and collapsed two very different social gatherings for African descended people (camp meetings and cake walk socials) into a single event. The artists who rendered the sheet music images backgrounded religious space and practices so that sacred forms of the African descended were repositioned to serve only as a bridge to popular entertainment. Artists who rendered sheet music cover art helped to racialize camp meetings as a Negro phenomenon and comedic occurrence first through widely circulating sheet music and then through artwork for the emerging recording industry. In addition, this conflation worked to diminish the fact that camp-meetings were tradition practiced first and more widely by white-bodied Protestants.

Historically camp-meetings were outdoor religious gatherings lasting for days or months that were practiced widely by white Methodists during and after the Great Awakening. In some cases, African descended congregants participated in the fringes of those worship spaces and eventually "colored" camp meetings began to spring up. Interracial participation at camp meetings in northern cities were recounted as early as the 1840s. The most detailed accounts of camp meetings before 1915 that African descended people organized took place in association with the network of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches. The AME camp-meetings were centrally planned by regional leaders and event details were diligently archived in national denomination publications to record the strict piety of each event. Incongruent with the well-documented historical practice for African descended faith practitioners at camp-meetings, many

of the musical representations in early recordings reference the Cake Walk and popular secular social dance.

The print culture and social dance spaces surrounding Black performance - whether practiced, imagined, or mimicked - was in conversation with the earliest popular recordings in the United States. The grouping of camp-meeting musical recordings that appeared before 1915 exemplify the way that musical and cultural particularities for Black performance have been collapsed within the music industry to background cultural specificity and religious significance since its inception. In addition, many of the recordings function to replace the complexities of multi-faceted cultural and religious tradition with more easily consumed racial tropes. This was the climate within which Fisk singers in the early twentieth century worked to stage and record counter performances in an effort to salvage the legacy of their own religious and musical performance traditions. However, the last camp meeting song of that era was recorded by the male quartet of Fisk Jubilee singers in their celebrated traditional style and sanctioned by Fisk University.

In 1909 when Fisk Jubilee Quartet recorded and toured, they interrupted a decade of internationally circulating minstrel recordings as well as three decades of live performances and sheet music that lampooned and deformed the performance of Negro spirituals and African descended peoples' religious practices. The Fisk Jubilee Quartet performed sacred music to foreground religious significance and counter the anti-Black sentiment incited by the transnational success of their predecessors. They embraced emerging recording technologies in conversation with embodied performance. The Jubilee Quartet recorded songs from the traditional Fisk program toward the reclaiming of the legacy of Spirituals. They performed their humanity through song recordings and narrative performances that conveyed access for the souls

of Black folk to heaven and the Divine. Like their predecessors who constituted the original group, the Fisk Jubilee Quartet from 1908-1915 performed religious fervor and modified folk music traditions that functioned to counteract anti-black sentiment. Their recordings worked to foreground the religious and cultural significance of sacred music for the African descended.

The recordings of Fisk Jubilee Singers not only influenced the sound of early Black recordings but the very structure of popular Black performance as listeners consume it today. This consumption of Black religious music as popular culture, then and now, is part of a continuing discourse about race, rights, and belief systems that manifests through a dialectic between afrological cultural *participation* and contrasting packaged *presentation* that has been gendered and racialized through transnational circuits. Also continuing is the tension between vocalists who possess high levels of talent, and structures and technology designed to capture and posses that talent and cultural production often in opposition to the interest of performers. The Fisk Jubilee Quartet singers were among the first performers to contribute to such discourse and navigate such tensions immediately before and during the very origins of the recording industry. The continuation of this discourse is evidenced by many scores of Negro performance groups across the country emerged as musical offspring with names that included the word "Jubilee" like the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet well into the 1930s and the Jubilaires into the 1950s.

Golden Gate (Jubilee) Quartet

Reminiscent of Jubilee performance in service to Fisk University yielding both revenue and transnational acclaim, gospel music in the twentieth century also moved from religious *participation* practices in cultural spaces into *presentation* forms and functions of service within the entertainment industry and as well as United States diplomacy initiatives. Following the

precedent set by Fisk jubilee Singers came subsequent trends either emulating Jubilee styles (toward commerce) as did scores of Negro groups, or those mocking Jubilee styles (toward commerce) as did white-bodied Blackface performers. One significant group of subsequent African descended performers of sacred folk music was the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet. Golden Gate would create and perform in conversation with both the legacy of service music set by Fisk singers, as well as the presumptions of service often prescribed to their black bodies throughout most of the twentieth century.

The influence of Golden Gate on vocal music and vocal delivery styles from gospel to contemporary hip-hop and everything in between cannot be overstated. For example, a group that was founded more than a decade after Golden Gate called the Soul Stirrers and led by a phenom named Sam Cooke, credited Golden Gate as a primary influence. In addition one can hear performers on the legendary early rap song "Rappers Delight" rendering a sing-speak vocal delivery style that sounds like an exact reiteration of the Golden style first recorded in 1937. The group leader and bass singer, Orlandus Wilson, performed for six decades with Golden Gate Quartet, the latter four decades based in Paris, and during this time the group repeatedly demonstrated "the double-voiced quality intrinsic to gospel music"[32] and the "trickster"[33] style of orality theorized by Henry Louis Gates' as a figure or metaphor in literature based on African American vernacular practices. Like the Fisk Jubilee Quartet before them, The Golden Gate Quartet navigated racial restrictions and injustice through live-bodied and sonic "doings" of Gospel music in conversation and sometimes in contestation with their own commercialized,

[32] Soyica Diggs Colbert, *The African American Theatrical Body : Reception, Performance, and the Stage* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 123.

[33]Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*.

recorded, packaged, and internationally distributed performances. In addition, the Golden Gate Quartet managed encounters with and again their own sound through the new media of radio, television and film during the Jim Crow era when media and corresponding industries were racially segregated in ways that worked to ensure inequality. Distinct from the performance and presentational practice of the Fisk Jubilee quartet who worked to keep Spirituals out of the background of minstrel practices and in the foreground of its own tradition, Golden Gate singers often strategically backgrounded their own gospel music traditions in ways that unmarked ethnic or racial identity to keep ethnicity and race away from the foreground.[34] During the late 1930s and early 1940s Golden Gate Quartet singers masterfully blended gospel music sounds and African American vernacular speech traditions with commercial radio formats as well as established vaudeville styles to help develop the emerging genre of radio jingles in order to appeal to radio audiences that broadcasters perceived to be exclusively of European descent. Their mainstream performances and presentation counteracted the dominant mythologies circulating surrounding Negro humanity and citizenship including the manner in which they were presented in text or through images personally or by association as African descended men.

Golden Gate Quartet practiced the dynamicism required to manage ethnic and racial performance in a manner that would later be called *code switching* when they performed and recorded for white audiences. The repertoire and presentation style that the Golden Gate Quartet presented on the radio and in most of their recorded work and corresponding live shows for white audiences was a mix a traditional Jubilee styled spirituals and gospel songs sprinkled with

[34] For more on discussions of vocal timbre and racial identity see Eidsheim, Nina Sun. "Voice as a technology of selfhood: towards an analysis of racialized timbre and vocal performance." (2008).

some comedic song narrative consistent with Afrological storytelling traditions. However, this was not exactly the repertoire or style they performed in Negro churches. In contrast, among exclusively Negro audiences, they earned the title of "church wreckers" during the "caravan" tours they headlined Yet even more interesting than their code switching was the way in which their live performances among Negro audiences, with a history that predated their mainstream success, were in conversation with the broadcasted and recorded versions of themselves packaged and marketed to white audiences. Golden Gate Quartet not only mastered the ability to *play the changes* they encountered across race lines and across intra-ethnic distinctions associated with various African American church denominations, they rode the technologies waves of radio, records, television, and film in conversation with segregated live performance to maintain and advance distinct performance styles simultaneously.

Although the Golden Gate Quartet was most widely known internationally and among white audiences for their rendering of traditional spirituals the group dropped the word "Jubilee" from their name by 1936. The four men singers performed in churches throughout the South incessantly during their early years and by 1935. Fifteen years before the trend of Black music radio formats, they were featured on the first radio station in the country to broadcast blues music regularly, which was Memphis WMC-AM. Their first recording session was produced by RCA in 1937, and, in 1939, they were featured performers at the second legendary Carnegie Hall event "Spirituals to Swing: A evening of American Negro Music" on the bill with Bennie Goodman, Count Basie's Orchestra, and Rosetta Tharpe. Within a year they were weekly performers in Greenwich Village, New York and heard three times a week on air at the CBS radio station WABC. With growing popularity for their club performances, which were mentioned with enthusiasm in Variety magazine, First Lady Roosevelt came to see them perform

and invited them to be the first Negro performers at the President's inaugural event in Washington DC at Constitution Hall where Marion Anderson had been previously barred. Within months the Mexican government invited the group to perform at a Pan-American concert in Mexico City, and the group would later perform at State Department sponsored events in numerous countries throughout their career. In 1942 they appeared in the first two of multiple film appearances that would follow starring with a film called *Star Spangled Rhythm* starring Bob Hope, and every star on the roster including Katherine Dunham. For several years the Golden Gate Quartet toggled between New York and Hollywood with great popularity in mainstream venues among white audiences. They sang commercial-friendly gospel songs, secular popular tunes, original songs with political commentary as content, and jubilee-styled spirituals. The singers recorded a music and comedy segment for the Armed Services Radio Service broadcast to deployed troops during WWII. By 1945 they were featured on CBS radio in New York five times per week singing station identification jingles and certain songs from their repertoire in condensed and modified form.

However, within a year of their daily New York radio spots their records were hardly listed at all in the most influential Black newspaper, *Chicago Defender.* The group was certainly not celebrated in the periodical during this time. In contrast, artists like the Jubilaires and the Soul Stirrers were having multiple mentions on the list of recommended music and frequent coverage otherwise. The Jubilaires and Soul Stirrers (featuring Sam Cooke) were clearly influenced by the earlier version the Golden Gate Quartet, which had been the mostly highly regarded group of "church wreckers" among Negro congregations in the South, midwest. The Jubilaires and the Soul Stirrers filled the void left by Golden once the group had made segregated white venues their primary performance spaces. Without evidence of continued popularity

among Negro listeners, the Golden Gate Quartet continued to sell about 500,000 records a year on Columbia in addition to earlier titles distributed by previous labels. In 1948 the group decided to reconnect with their initial core audience and launched a national tour with dates scheduled exclusively at church venues similar to the tours of their early career.

The same year, an unnamed source at Columbia records confided to the Black press that Columbia had sent a shipment of Gates records to Europe, and they sold out immediately. It is very possible based on Columbia legal practices during that era and through the late twentieth century that the Golden Gate Quartet received no royalties from records sold overseas and very little if any royalties from the one million records sold during and after their caravan church tours targeting Negro fans. By 1953 Columbia had licensed Golden Gate Quartet music to companies in England and France. Titles were manufactured in France and Italy and no doubt distributed across Europe. In subsequent years the recordings made their way through African countries as well and contemporary Francophone gospel performers in Paris cite Golden Gate Quartet as a primary influence from childhood years in Congo, Senegal, and Cameroon.[35] Since there were no reports in *Billboard* magazine about this international activity, the physical discs that have survived with production and manufacturing details in various languages with the Columbia logo appearing in conjunction with foreign logos are the primary sources for the quartet's commercial history in Europe and beyond. Not long after this distribution success, their international travel as US musical ambassadors began. In 1958 the Chicago Defender reported Golden Gate Quartet's many sold out concerts in countries including India, Israel, Egypt, and Spain and that they had only been in the US for three months during the previous three years. About twenty years after

[35] Almost all of my informants from Francophone countries talk about listening to Golden Gate Quartet as children in home countries.

their first broadcast appearances on Memphis radio and ten years after Black format radio began in the US, Elvis Presley reportedly came to see Golden perform in Paris while on military leave in 1960 and lingered back stage with Golden into the early morning hours once an impromptu jam session ensued. The last original member, Orlandus Wilson, had made Paris his permanent home by that time and even after his death in 1999 the group appeared regularly throughout Europe where current members live and continue to perform.

An early example of the doubleness that Golden Gate expertly developed and performed can be found through an examination of three recordings of the song "Gospel Train." The song was recorded as early as 1937 in their first recording session after several years of traveling and performing as a leading gospel quartet. This rise to the top of quartet performance was no small feat considering that male quartet groups by the dozens emerged from every corner of the South during this era. If their earliest recording session is a sample of their live performance style during that period, the precision and highly skilled delivery of Golden Gate would have been extremely difficult to match without hours each week for months and years of disciplined practice not only together as Golden Gate but in home and church environments leading up to Golden's formation in 1934.[36] While the earliest recording session does include the spirituals in the traditional style that Golden Gate Quartet would be most known for widely, there are also gospel songs including "Gospel Train" which is delivered with an aggressive and confident percussive groove anticipating the instrumental parallel that would later be recognized as funk music.

[36] In subsequent versions of this work I aim to include more research about the origins of the members once that research is complete

For Golden Gate Quartet, the gospel train as rendered during their earliest known recording session is a powerful machine where motion and music are inextricable while movement across boundaries is undeterred by surrounding conditions, inclement or otherwise, toward the purpose of saving, delivering, carrying, and relocating. For Golden Gate Quartet the gospel train is a Negro woman and "she blows"[37] or sings or wails or moans sounds inherited through African retentions of pentatonic scales and Afrologial cultural traditions. In the last third of the song, after the singers had already recreated the sounds of the train horns, the rhythmic sound of the wheels, and even a harmonica being played by someone along for the ride, the singers recreate the sound that was most likely heard in religious practice environments by Negro woman while in prayer. This sound was part of an improvisational vocabulary that remained a part of Black woman "prayer warrior" traditions through the twenty-first century and while not exclusive to men, was practiced in one of the only spaces where women in Pentecostal traditions not only outnumbered men but could move with "as much or even more authority than their pastors"[38] based on validating scripture.[39] While widely practiced by women, the sound is hardly feminine and amplifies the inadequacy of simple gender binaries in discussions where humanity itself was not recognized by law or social structures. The sound is however indicative of the role women played in the movement and reproduction of Black music even when they themselves

[37] "She blows" is a lyric from the song Gospel train and also the phrase "she can blow" is an African American vernacular phrase that means she can sing very well with greater than average ability.

[38] Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ : Making a Sanctified World*, 36.

[39] There is a scripture in the KJV Bible that reads, "Call for the mourning women"

were not the forwarded performers and when gospel music itself was backgrounded yet employed as the *steam engine* of American music.

To be clear, there are sounds and styles that correspond more to the roles men played in the same church environments and this means not only the actual sound but the function of the sound in a gospel song. James Brown's improvisational vocabulary was lifted directly from this preacher/leader sound tradition, while the sound styles employed by Little Richard most famously - again meaning the *role* that the sound phrases played in the song not just the phrases themselves - are drawn heavily from the support and affect labor that women performed in the same environments during that time.[40] In neither case do the sounds themselves align perfectly with prevalent ideas of masculine or feminine per se then or now. In addition to the "trope of the train"[41] that appeared frequently in gospel and blues more generally during the 1930s and preceding decades, this early Golden rendition of "Gospel Train" conveys the sound aesthetic of a *locomotive* more specifically (gendered feminine in French) in that it sounds willful and determined from the power *located within* the moving vehicle itself - the physical force of steam generated internally - rather than a train that is understood only in the context of service or hospitality and expected to function in deference to external systems of regulation.

The gospel train is less reliant on the visual sphere and eschews ocular-based descriptions so it is the sound of her wailing whistle that announces her presence, powerful movement, and her inevitable disappearance toward her next destination. In the earliest recording, a lead singer

[40] Marion Wiliams would help to shift this dynamic in the late forties and early fifties.

[41] For more discussion of trains and other motion machine tropes see Maxile, Horace J. "Extensions on a black musical tropology: From trains to the mothership (and beyond)." *Journal of Black Studies* 42, no. 4 (2011): 593-608.

signals the start of the song with the phrase “My Lord, she blows” and the full vocals begin with two short train whistle sounds on the first beat of the first measure that might be written eighth-note-eighth-note. Two short sounds from a train is one of many standard signals historically and this alone might indicate that the train is at a station and will be soon taking off.[42] The lead vocalist beckons the listener with “get on board” and “better get your ticket now” but immediately another “she blows” leads into tow long wailing whistle. Each of the consecutive long whistle sounds lasted seven beats, almost two 4/4 measures each, which might be written as a whole note tied to a dotted half note in the next measure and a quarter rest at the end of that second measure where the singers took a breath. The two long wails at the beginning - within the first twenty-seconds of the song - inform the listener that the train is in motion at full speed for the remainder of the song. The wails sound like they are delivered with wide open mouths by all four singers yet with intentional nasal passage closure to mimic the train more effectively. The notes that comprise the harmony of the wail sounds like A1, D#, C#1, and D. Following the first simulation of two long wail whistles, that signal a train releasing its breaks, leaving the station, and building speed, the singers increase the tempo slightly.

Two later Golden Gate versions of “Gospel Train” both from a series of CBS radio transcripts dated 1939 to 1944 are not necessarily different enough to be considered new arrangements but the delivery and modified compositional elements evidence the process of backgrounding that was already taking place for gospel music styles and form in musical work geared toward white audiences. The tempo is slower for both subsequent versions with each version having a decreased level of verve from the one before. The earliest version is about 130

[42] See http://www.up.com/aboutup/funstuff/horn_signals/index.htm

beats per minute while the second and third version that are included in the radio collection are about 110 and 120 beats per minute respectively. The second recording is an a cappella performance while the third includes piano accompaniment and ends with applause to indicate a live audience which was most likely segregated and all white. Beyond generating a more relaxed and leisurely aesthetic the significance of the slower tempo in both cases is how the sonic representation of a slower train changes how the song functions with regard to the implications of mobility, force, and momentum for both the gospel train and for the kinesthetic delivery of the performers. Both whistling trains and singing human bodies require more force or energy to move faster and the consequence in both cases can be increased momentum. An increase in momentum for a moving body or a train can signal the potential of the body or train to move past the point of control, self or social. The train's potential that corresponds with momentum is not unlike the potential for the bodies of ring shout worshippers who increase tempo and movement in the process of transcendence to a state of spirit filled shouting past the point of control, self or social. Within faith communities that privilege this practice it is a sign of Holy Ghost inhabitation or what some might describe as *possession*.

The train's potential also corresponds to the momentum required for both the social mobility and social movements that counteracted Jim Crow ideas and practices. Years later that potential for social mobility and social movement for justice would be offered by Mahalia Jackson as an imperative in her rendition of "Move on up a Little Higher" and in numerous songs offered by the Staple Singers in subsequent decades. The earliest recording of "Gospel Train" successfully sounded the potential of movement through tempo and forceful delivery in ways that embodied the momentum that could upset social structures, while the second and third versions suggest more contained movement without much force from bodies allowing listeners to

imagine machines and movement that can be more easily halted. In the third version, there is no long whistle blowing twice consecutively at the beginning and the extended wail has been replaced by two very short ones that might be written as two stocatto quarter notes or eight note-eighth-rest-eigtht-note-eighth-rest. In that version there is only a long wait at the very end allowing listeners a train that if leaving the station. The elimination of the long blows until the very end of the song mean that it does not facilitate listeners imagining a gospel train with momentum during the course of the performance.

From the first to the third version included in this analysis, the energy and focus shifts from the gospel train as a powerful locomotion that is internally driven, to the passengers who are beckoned onto a train waiting to serve them. The decrease in tempo, the added emphasis of the sound of breaks releasing steam to perform a train at rest, and the elimination of the whistle sounds that conveyed full speed in previous version, all together evidence the backgrounding of the gospel train in service and deference to paying passengers. This musical shift reflects how Golden Gate Quartet modified their sound and style away from hard driving folk gospel music aesthetics toward a more accommodating performance style that was more commercially appealing. Golden Gate Quartet delivered this modified style in numerous motion pictures and on more that sixty albums that circulated transnationally through the end of the twentieth century.

Mahalia Jackson

As a woman, and as a performer of gospel music, Mahalia Jackson disrupted a long performance tradition of man-led or man-performed Jubilee styled spirituals in Europe when she first arrived in Paris in 1952. Although the recordings of Rosetta Tharpe and Marie Knight had already been aired on radio alongside reviews by key music critics, the women had not yet

travelled to Europe, and their music was most often presented as jazz or blues. It was mostly men singers who had travelled overseas and continued the international performance of modified spirituals beyond the U.S. following the initial Fisk Jubilee tours of the 1870s.[43] After nearly a century of Negro religious performance in Europe, Mahalia Jackson presented herself to help establish gospel music as a category distinct from other religious forms and also distinct from blues, swing, or bebop. Jackson "almost single-handedly"[44] helped to introduce gospel music in the US and Europe as a genre distinguishable from Jubilee styled songs and slightly more available for consumption than the modified spirituals which had circulated almost exclusively over the previous eight decades. Still, her public ascension was not without some tension associated with a woman traveling and performing without a husband during that era. In addition, her European debut lagged far behind her own recordings and those of Tharpe and Knight, which had already been circulating internationally across radio and as packaged consumer goods. Jackson's European performances and the narratives she wrote and spoke surrounding such performances simultaneously countered the suspicion of indecency that might have been tethered to her sex, and also worked to diminish the prominence of the mass manufactured versions of gospel voice. On one hand, Jackson demonstrated an abundance of piety - in spite of her womanhood - in a manner that resituated her body as little more than a

[43] These singers included: Thomas Rutling, who was an original Fisk singer of the 1870s who never returned to the United States and taught and performed modified spirituals in England for several decades; Roland Hayes, who in the early 1900s was a singer with the all male Fisk Jubilee Quartet before embarking on his international solo career; Paul Robeson who performed and took up residence in Europe in the 1930s; and finally, the four man singing group Golden Gate (Jubilee) Quartet, who travelled extensively across continents for over three decades.

[44] Raymond Horricks, 1958.'Mahalia's Emotional Performance at Newport Festival,' *Jazz News*, 1958.

credible conduit for sacred music. On the other hand, Jackson emphasized her own corporeality as a source of cultural production and showcased her body's visible labor, fallibility, and ultimately pleasure, in contrast to the inanimate recording materials from which listeners might otherwise consume her sound. In both cases, Jackson framed her performance as ongoing religious labor in a way that helped her to bypass certain gendered limitations associated with her body, counter the way that consumer possessions of sound recordings might conceal the labor of music making, and claim possession of gospel music as a distinct form that became her own.

Possession by Naming and Claiming[45]

With use of the term gospel, Jackson introduced by name a sacred rhythmic musical practice, which had often been described for well over a century without a name or by many different names in accounts of Negro religious performance, in a way that rendered gospel music her own performance space and style. To audiences who were unfamiliar and had little basis for comparison, she became the pioneer and "queen" of musical territory that had already been inhabited for generations. Jackson delivered narrative and performance in a way that situated herself the authority for the genre that she with her manger, publicist, and label executives claimed as hers. Contrary to widespread belief, Mahalia Jackson - by her own admission - was

[45] Robin D. G. Kelley, "Dig They Freedom: Meditations on History and the Black Avant-Garde," *Lenox Avenue: A Journal of Interarts Inquiry* 3 (1997).; This section builds upon Kelley's idea that ""soul" was not a thing or an essence one possessed; it was a discourse through which African Americans, at a particular historical moment (1960s and 1970s), claimed ownership (emphasis mine) of the symbols and practices of their own imagined community. [...] As debates over the black aesthetic raged, the concept of soul was an assertion that there are "black ways" of doing things, even if those ways are contested and the boundaries around what is "black" are fluid." I build upon this idea to acknowledge how key people in entertainment industries have payed close attention to this process and participated in the distribution of Black cultural production toward their own commercial or career success. In the case of Jackson, these players were her managers and international disk jockeys respectively.

not the most skillful gospel singer in the world during the era when she emerged, and not the most highly regarded across Negro communities or even U.S. music critics.[46] Still, she might have been the greatest gospel singer that most listeners had ever heard as a result of her efforts to name, claim, then possess the genre space as her domain. Jackson accomplished this occupation of gospel music with help from her management, record label, and European disc jockeys who lauded her music even if US radio and consumer trends did not.

Gospel music as a category simply did not exist for most radio listeners and record buyers around the world before Jackson, so while she helped to introduce the genre to these listeners she also took possession of the new space as its reining "queen"[47] within the music industry. In ways unsurpassed by her predecessors and contemporaries, Jackson wrote, spoke, and sang her way into collective music consciousness as the embodiment of gospel music so that even today her name is inextricable from the form. Jackson accomplished this by resisting and avoiding naming practices that grouped *her* music with jazz or blues. Her adamant avoidance of secular terms required an alternative space to fashion sonic identity and determine her music on different terms. Choosing to occupy or possess the *new* or unclaimed territory of gospel was a way for Jackson present her performance as reputable and religious or sacred within the US, and also take advantage of the growing popularity in Europe for "spirituals" on the radio.

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[46] "Coin Machines: Ratings 90-100 Tops. 80-89 Excellent. 70-79 Good 40-69 Satisfactory. 0-39 Poor," *The Billboard (Archive: 1894-1960)*, 1949/01/08/ 1949.; The Coral Recording was reviewed in the "Folk" category and given a "satisfactory" rating of 60 out of 100. The reviewer states, "Miss Jackson isn't up to her usual evangelical fervor on this repetition hymn performance," but in all fairness, the record was one from her fist record deal that was reissued once her career began to take off with a different label almost ten years later.

[47] Mahalia Jackson overtook what might have been the "throne" of Rosetta Tharpe, if Tharpe had defined herself in such a way.

Before Jackson and her team claimed the term "gospel" for her performance and recordings, the music fitting that description had for decades resonated between genres with inconsistent nomenclature across categories such as: race music, spirituals, religious (but not sacred), jazz, blues, and swing. Although references to Negro religious music practices described as "gospel" appeared as early as 1903, it was not until the late 1940s that commercial recording practices actually marked the Negro folk music tradition as "gospel" for public consumption. The tradition was initially presented as a commercial category when songwriter and music publisher Thomas Dorsey consistently described his compositions, promoted with Mahalia Jackson's live interpretations, as gospel music. Even then, Dorsey's publishing circulated mostly within Negro Baptist church communities exclusively so the term was not prominent within the mainstream record music industry or radio during that time. Gospel music had been a form of musical participation, rather than commercial presentation, until Dorsey's ambition to professionalize the practice.

In *Billboard* and Variety trade magazines for most of the 1930s, writers did not use the term gospel to describe Negro religious music although there is evidence that the term had been used among Negros to describe musical practices with African retentions for many decades. Until the late 1930s, *Billboard* editors often grouped all religious recordings from Hebrew songs to Negro spirituals into the same "religious" category and did not apply the term "gospel" to Negro music. For example, Rosetta Tharpe's music was labelled "religious" in Billboard magazine early on until listed under "spirituals" when that category appeared although "swing" was often used to describe her live nightclub appearances. In contrast, during that same time when Thomas Dorsey was heavily promoting gospel music as distinct from hymns from his base in Chicago, the only U.S. radio programming listed with "gospel" in the name was a weekly

NBC Chicago radio show titled "The Gospel Singer" originally and then "*Your* Gospel Singer" by 1938.[48] That show featured soloist Edward MacHugh, a white-bodied Canadian Scottish immigrant. This disjuncture evidences the fact that the way sacred music circulated among practitioners along with the language used within folk communities to describe musical forms was often dramatically different than the way it circulated across the mainstream music industries.

The rise of the term "spirituals" within press and music industry trade periodicals during the late thirties did not necessarily mean that the music was regarded as sacred or serious, and Jackson would eventually avoid this term as well because of its growing association with swing and jazz. In 1938, although Jackson had released recordings two years prior, she was not one of the performers at the legendary 1938 Carnegie Hall "Spirituals to Swing" concert who helped to establish "spirituals" as the name for rhythmic folk music produced by Negro singers and musicians. It might also be the case that at the moment when industry executives linked spirituals and swing Jackson's music was simply not regarded highly enough by critics to have been considered a part of the historic event. Jackson's predecessor and contemporary Rosetta Tharpe, contracted with the Decca label famous for is catalog of race records, was featured at the historic concert as was Golden Gate Quartet. Both Tharpe and Golden Gate went on to perform weekly in residence at New York clubs and achieve unprecedented popularity and record sales for their rhythmic "swinging-spiritual" renderings. Absent from the industry-shifting Carnegie concert, and not interested in performing in secular venues, Jackson's determination was incongruent with the career trajectories of Tharpe and Golden Gate. Even if event planners did not invite

[48] Abel, "Radio: Edward Machugh," *Variety (Archive: 1905-2000)*, 1934/04/17/ 1934.

Jackson to participate as a spiritual swinger, she would later forge an alternative path choosing "gospel" as her designation instead. For example, twelve years after Tharpe and Golden Gate performed "spirituals" on a legendary lineup at Carnegie Hall, Jackson was the headliner there in a concert described as the "First Negro Gospel Concert at Carnegie Hall" in the Chicago Defender.[49]

Jackson's fashioning of a gospel as a narrow religious and commercial category functioned to reclaim Negro music as sacred and respectable during the peak of the swing era. By determining herself a gospel singer rather than a swinger of spirituals, which was the trend led by Rosetta Tharpe, Jackson circumvented the social derogation that had historically taken place in US for Negro performers of race music in the popular sphere like blues and hot jazz. This circumvention was necessary because around the late 1940s, the term "spirituals" began appearing in Billboard as a racialized category for recordings that functioned to remove Negro vocality from the categories of "sacred" or "religious" music respectively. New recordings by Negros labelled spirituals, but not necessarily regarded as religious or sacred by mainstream standards, appeared in this "new" industry category just as the categories "race music" and "folk" disappeared, and just as the categories "rhythm and blues" and "country and western" appeared for the first time in Billboard magazine.[50]

A primary example of the way that spirituals were not esteemed as highly as those simply labelled "religious" was the absence of "spirituals" from radio programming in the US during the

[49] "8,000 Witness First Negro Gospel Concert at Carnegie Hall: mahalia Jackson Captures Crowd with Unique Spiritual Styling," *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967)*, 1950/10/14/ 1950.

[50] "Music: Record Reviews." 1949.*The Billboard (Archive: 1894-1960)*, Jul 09, 33-165.

first twenty-five years of Jackson's career. Although discs eventually categorized as "spiritual" were available for sale with rigorous advertisement in *Billboard*, domestic radio programming generally did not include records categorized as spirituals, which were deemed unsuitable for public broadcast like most rhythmic Negro music at the time. With Golden Gate Quartet being a rare exception, radio broadcasts excluded Negro music in spite of reports that records sales where highly profitable. Negro artists generally did not appear in any radio listings of local or national radio programming published in *Billboard* or *Variety* until the mid to late 1950s. In contrast, European disc jockeys listed Golden Gate Quartet, Rosetta Tharpe, and Marie Knight as artist featured during jazz and blues programming as early as the 1940s.

Mahalia Jackson performed social and cultural modes of being possessed that functioned as a layer of credibility for an unmarried woman who might no have been deemed so otherwise. Mahalia allowed certain entities to *claim* her, her musical performance, and career in a way that satisfied the expectation for a Black woman of the era to be held accountable to some greater authority. In the letter Jackson sent to fans preceding her European tour, she lists among her accomplishments that she had been designated the official soloist of the National Baptist Convention.[51] The honor of the Baptists claiming Jackson was different than other accomplishments because it marked a gender specific requirement that Jackson be held accountable to an authority beyond herself in order maintain respectable status as an unmarried woman. In some ways, this type of social and cultural possession that Jackson practiced is an

[51] "Mahalia Jackson Speaking," *Melody Maker (Archive: 1926-2000)*, 1952/11/01/ 1952.;Another article mistakenly associates Jackson with the "Southern Baptist Church Association" instead of the "National Baptist Convention." The two groups are the result of a split that took place after the Civil War. The National Baptists are a conglomerate of Black churches.

extension of family or community *belonging* that often permeates folk music forms where collective participation is common. However, as in the case of marriage, where possessive language like "this is *my* wife" has a legal history of literal ownership, the hierarchy of belonging suggests a unilateral structure of accountability that often subjugated women. Akin to this gendered hierarchy is the expectation for social and cultural possession with which Jackson had to contend as a woman performer from the 1930s. For Jackson, the necessity of belonging, or the requirement to be claimed, often exceeded cultural or social traditions shared by her men predecessors and counterparts. Her status as a divorced woman left a void in the space where she should have been claimed by a husband, but she maintained her status as a "lady" in the way that unmarried women practitioners had been doing in sacred spaces for decades. She filled the gap of male authority with that of the religious organization that claimed her. Not unlike modes of possession that suggest material ownership as in the case of real property, the social practice of claiming also relies of the language of possession (my, mine, hers, his, ours) and this is where the slippage occurs between cultural belonging, social hierarchy, and property ownership.

Jackson's being claimed by the Baptists meant distancing herself from profane sonic identities, which helped to dispossess from gospel music those practitioners and practices that had constituted a continuum of Black music performance across genre categories, while helping to erect borders around the sacred performance space that she occupied. Despite the musical similarities, shared performance practices, and overlapping aesthetics that gospel shared with jazz and blues, Jackson rejected such categorizations for her performance by framing her body and her religious subjectivity as inextricable from the actual music. Although Rosetta Tharpe's seeming acceptance of her music being categorized jazz or blues might have rendered much mainstream success in secular or "worldly" venues during the swing craze, Tharpe was not

necessarily successful in carving a space for herself that marked her own significance to those genre designations during her lifetime. Alternatively, Jackson strategically embraced the same gendered practices for belonging, or naming and claiming, that had historically yielded Black women's bodies as always available for consumption or commodification, in order to ultimately name herself the authority and claim possession of the music that brought her body pleasure.

Business and Service

It is quite possible that consecutive unprecedented events in Europe in praise of Jackson's recordings are what helped to separate her from musical peers in the US and ultimately become the recognized queen of gospel transnationally. Jackson's sudden European acclaim followed by a multi-city European tour with ample mentions in US press might have retroactively plummeted her to "queen" status despite having equal or lesser regard among US counterparts including Rosetta Tharpe. Although Jackson was most highly esteemed by the organization of Southern Baptists, she lagged far behind Rosetta Tharpe, who was from a Pentecostal tradition, in terms record sales, concert dates, and overall notoriety. In contrast, Jackson's first recordings on the Decca label in 1937 had not been very successful by industry standards. It wasn't until about a decade later that her recording career took off with her second round of Apollo sessions that yielded her first 'signature' record, "Move on Up a Little Higher" recorded in Chicago in 1947. In the meantime, women singers from the same musical tradition as Rosetta Tharpe and Arizona Dranes, or influenced by the same tradition, had been gaining momentum and notoriety across the US through regional church tours and revival crusades by the late 1940s.

It was the activity in Europe surrounding Jackson's recordings that would ultimately set her apart from her contemporaries. For example, Jackson's astonishing record sales in Denmark were so newsworthy that they triggered coverage of Jackson in *Variety* magazine, quite possibly

for the first time ever, along with discussion of her pending European tour. Among Negro listeners, it was Jackson's "tremendous reception across the pond" that differentiated her from other top vocalists who had performed and recorded with equal or greater reception among Negro communities. Jackson's success overseas prompted recognition for her in the US that lifted her out of the shadow of Rosetta Tharpe, who had not yet toured Europe at the time. Jackson's distinguishing turning point came in 1951 when *l'Académie Charles Cros*, a newly created society of music professionals and critics based in France, awarded her the *Grands Prix du disque* award for her release featuring "I Can Put My Trust in Jesus" and "Let the Power of the Holy Ghost Fall On Me" on Apollo records.[52] Only months later in the same year her recording of "Silent Night" was featured on a nationally sponsored radio program in Denmark and that record became the number one seller in that country once the record company and partners could supply the overwhelming demand.[53]

Or perhaps, Jackson's turning point came in 1949 when she signed a contract with Harry Lenetska for personal management. Lenetska had been a vaudeville booking agent until being drafted to the army and serving in Europe during WWI. He returned the US and joined the staff of the William Morris Agency where he booked acts, including international tours or appearances, through the 1930s before eventually forming an independent enterprise. Within just a few weeks of signing Jackson, Lenetska had her booked for a six month US national tour, quite possibly her first comprehensive tour aside from frequent church appearances, that ended with

[52] "Mahalia Jackson Wins Top French Honors for Record," *Afro-American (1893-1988)*, 1951/05/05/ 1951.

[53] "Collectors' Corner: The Tharpe Wedding Will Be out in May," *Melody Maker (Archive: 1926-2000)*, 1952/04/19/ 1952.

her Carnegie Hall debut. It was also after their business agreement commenced that mentions of Jackson in both US trade publications and African American press spiked significantly. In addition, her records released during that season were the first ever reviewed in major London music publications although she had been recording with Apollo for about three years at that point. The spike in activity surrounding her newest recordings suggests that, through some combination of effort from her management and record label, promotional copies of Jackson's recorded were being shipped to "tastemakers" in Europe. Such influencers might have included xeAndre Hodeir who was a French music critic in the group of those who selected Jackson for the *Grands Prix du disque* award, John Jorgensen who was the disk jockey who included Jackson on his program aired over Danish State Radio, or their respective associates.

A year before Jackson's arrival in Europe, a journalist reporting from Paris quotes French music critic Andre Hodeir as saying that Jacksons recordings were "approaching more the blues (feeling) than the opera" as he imagines a musical array where opera is at one far end, and blues on the other.[54] The article summarized Hodeir's sentiments contrasting "the grand scale arrangements of spirituals like the Fisk Jubilee singers" and the "finished scholastic presentations of Marian Anderson or Paul Robeson" with the folk music of Mahalia Jackson. The French critic's association of gospel music with the blues rather than jazz, which by the 1950s in Paris was most a highly regarded in its bebop form consumed by intellectuals, was an indication that Hodeir interpreted gospel music as a folk form that required less intellect than opera or jazz, or at least less study, to perform or appreciate. The critics's interpretation that Jackson's music had a lower barrier to entry for performance and appreciation than the music of Anderson or Robeson,

[54] "Mahalia Jackson Wins Top French Honors for Record."

might have stemmed from the fact that Jackson herself was without formal music training or much formal education of any kind. Neither "finished" nor "scholastic," Jackson performed in a vernacular style, akin to the blues, and it was this folk rendering that made her music most commendable for Hodeir, who was himself a classically trained musician.

Jackson accepted the framework that situated her performance as vernacular and therefore particular to her Negro heritage, but she countered the soundness of Hodeir's critique by framing her work as service to God. In this way, Jackson shifted the structure of evaluation away from the tastes of audience or critics and more toward an interpretation of the divine and also separated herself from the growing commercial enterprise surrounding her work. Jackson's assertions of faith along with lyrical content framed her work as a vocal offering to God and His people so that when she triumphed in performance, some who took in the show framed themselves as outsiders witnessing an act of personal belief. The thread for Jackson was performance as service she rendered to God in gratitude for having been "truly blessed" to the first gospel singer on television and at Carnegie Hall. Mahalia Jackson drew upon certain Black church traditions for woman leadership and framed her solo performance as service to God in order to evade derision within Negro discourse and avoid the public possession and absolute consumption of popular culture with its seemingly inevitable outcome for the disregard of female bodies. Mahalia Jackson repeatedly employed frameworks of religious service to foreground her own Negro woman labor in a way that both restricted how her body and musical production might be consumed and simultaneously conveyed the value of her body and its liveness.

Working Body, Still Woman

Jackson framed her musical ability, and gospel music more broadly, as inextricable from a life of religious service alongside a history of personal and shared precarity in a way that

suggested those qualifications as prerequisites for gospel music performers and particularly for those who were women. Jackson's practice of contextualizing her performance in terms of experiences particular to her black-bodied woman subjectivity allowed for the continued association of Negro sacred music with conditions of racial injustice. This inference helped to maintain the particularity of American Negro performance and the Otherness that fueled its consumption transnationally. The lyrical association with suffering specific to black bodies and subsequent deliverance, through song if not otherwise, was a key qualifier of spirituals and gospel music as Negro expression. Lyrics worked in conjunction with the timbre most often associated with Negro voices that some scholars describe as "acousmatic blackness,"[55] as well as the "blue note" musicality harkening African retentions of a pentatonic scale. Jackson continued the long-standing tradition of embedding personal and social context within musical forms and delivery. Contexts for personal and collective precarity had already surrounded the performances of Negro religious music in Europe before Jackson entered the scene. Paul Robeson, for example, famously employed this association during his years in Europe and "used the stage and screen as his political platform"[56] to protest social and political disparities and injustices for black-bodied people and other marginalized groups transnationally. In addition to the broader association of precarity, Jackson relied heavily on her own precarious history and experiences to

[55] The term first employed by Mendi Obadike in Low Fidelity: Stereotyped Blackness in the Field of Sound, Ph.D. Dissertation (Durham: Duke University, 2005) was later incorporated by Nina Eidsheim's in a discussion of race and voice in Eidsheim, Nina Sun. "Marian Anderson and" Sonic Blackness" in American Opera." *American Quarterly* 63.3 (2011): 641-671.

[56] Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem : Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 114.

reiterate the practical relationship between salvation music and those singing their own deliverance.

Jackson recognized the appeal of her own precarious history specific to race and gender, and wrote an open letter to her European fans in order to satisfy the demand for such narrative. Jackson wrote, “They tell me that you people would like to know something about how I was reared, and how I started as a singer. Well I was born on a New Orleans waterfront. My family was very poor, and I began working when I was nine,” and then she continued to list an array of her stellar accomplishments achieved by “a simple woman, who was once a hungry child.”[57] It is possible that Jackson conceived a barrier between her performances and absolute public consumption by first suggesting that a personal history of precarity was intrinsic to gospel music culture and practice. Jackson foregrounded her lived experience as a way to counter the possibility of listeners consuming her recorded sound and ephemeral presence without regard to her physical body and cultural history. Jackson’s foregrounding of lived experience might function as an obstacle for privileged listeners who might otherwise evacuate Jackson’s bodily presence and erase her experience with their own imitation of her recordings independent of the conditions under which she performed. In other words, Jackson presented her lived experienced, and her subjectivity as a racialized and feminized service music performer, as the standard by which other gospel music performers might be deemed qualified, or not.

Congruent with her precarity narrative, Jackson’s body was the work site where she constructed gospel music as a genre in her form. In conversation with her own recorded sound, Jackson’s live performances disrupted any notion that technology could completely capture the

[57] "Mahalia Jackson Speaking."

sound-experience she offered or that listeners could casually consume her cultural practice as popular culture. On more than one occasion, Jackson's live performances during her initial European tour were in contest with the audio recordings that preceded her embodied presence on the continent. Jackson's European arrival, like that of the Golden Gate singers shortly before her, occurred once recordings of her voice had already circulated across Europe as packaged commercial goods and over radio.[58] Upon her arrival in Europe Jackson offered in-the-flesh demonstrations of this labor in ways that countered the possibility of complete or casual consumption and worked to discourage insouciant imitation of the form. Certain journalists reviewing her Paris and London performances, and also letter-writing fans, made comparisons between her live in-person performances and the recorded-live material sound objects bearing her name. Writers also contrasted her religious fervor with her expertise as "a great show-woman."[59] These comparisons amplified the tensions between her practice of musical participation in the cultural and religious context of Black churches, the medium of recorded sound distributed commercially, and also the presentation of her singing and dancing black body in foreign spaces. Jackson not only marked this tension surrounding her first European tour but also employed this very irresolution strategically toward preserving and maintaining the cultural relevance of her work, and as a tactic for asserting her own irreproducibility within an industry of mass-produced recorded sound.

[58] A few years later, CBS radio (as a trademark of Columbia) offer Jackson a radio show then compiled her on-air performances, promoted them alongside Golden Gate radio performances, and licensed them for manufacturing and distribution in Europe.

[59] "Mahalia Jackson Speaking."

Eventually, Jackson's consistent foregrounding of precarity and struggle performed through her own body would lead to an association of her music and image with weariness and permanent stillness. When she began to realize success as a recording artist her signature song was "Move on up a Little Higher," which allowed for interpretations of social mobility and political progress. At the end of her career the song most associated with Jackson was "Precious Lord," a song written by Thomas Dorsey after the death of his wife and often requested by Martin Luther King. The lyrics of the song, "Lord I'm tired, I'm so weak, I am worn" express and appeal for assistance but with no promise of deliverance so that the mournful sound and lyrics of despair make death sound eminent. As the most recognizable and mainstream gospel music soloist of her era and beyond, Mahalia Jackson embodied the "Civil Rights aesthetic" and evoked an affect that was compatible with the work of activists including Martin Luther King. She performed at John Kennedy's inaugural ball and during the March on Washington and in each instance, Jackson's voice is first associated with celebratory occasions. Ultimately however, because both King's and Kennedy's' lives ended with violent assassinations, Jackson's voice is also tied to death and dying. In the case of Martin Luther King, not only did she sing at his funeral, her singing voice accompanies his memorial at the civil rights museum in Memphis, TN. Further examples of Jackson's ultimate association with death include: her role in the in the 1959 film *Imitation of Life* directed by Douglas Sirk based on the 1933 novel by Fannie Hurst; her role in the Civil Rights movement, and her voice sounding at the site of Martin Luther King's assassination at the Loraine Motel; and her image circulated with King's by mortuaries promoting their services on paper fans across Black churches.

Although Jackson had earlier in her career gained a reputation among church going listeners as a singer who moved and swayed excessively while singing, the more mature and

nationally recognized version of Jackson was nationally known for her dignity and solemnity. Her *Imitation of Life* performance contributed to what became of permanent association of Jackson's voice with death and mourning, but is also a key iteration of a long existing association between morbidity, sacred music and Black female vocality.[60] In the film, Jackson sings:

> Soon I will be done… troubles of the world, troubles of the world, troubles of the world, Goin' home to live wid God.
>
> No more weepin' an' a wailin', No more weepin' an' a wailin' , No more weepin' an' a wailin' , I'm goin' home to live with my Lord

It is notable that a song anticipating future death would be the performed at the services for a character who is already deceased. In one sense, the lyrics that index future demise at services for one who has already passed away signifies a recurring and ongoing state of grief and death.[61] However, it is Jackson's delivery that points to future demise beyond the lyrics alone. Jackson sang the song in a "dirge" tempo and presented the song much slower than more hopeful sounding versions performed by Black college chorus groups during the same era.[62] Instead, Jackson "conjures up the unspeakable fatigue and collective weariness of centuries[63]" of African descended women with her slow delivery and still body. While it might seem obvious for stillness and subdued performance to be associated with a funeral service, this would not have necessarily been the case in many Black religious funeral traditions among the more than forty

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[60] Holloway, *Passed On*, 104.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Johari Jabir, "On Conjuring Mahalia: Mahalia Jackson, New Orleans, and the Sanctified Swing," *American Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2009): 667.

[63] Ibid.

denominations with which African descended worshippers identify. In fact, it is very likely that Jackson herself, a New Orleans native and most likely familiar with "high stepping" funeral rituals that culminate in a performance of "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In" in defiance of the absolute stillness that marks death. Perhaps earlier in her career, Jackson would have embellished more, and "cut" the grief with some level of movement or dance. Instead, it was Jackson's grave stillness during the *Imitation of Life* performance and in subsequent images depicting the scene, that helped to establish Jackson as a cultural icon.

In the film Jackson wore a blue choir robe, her hair up in waves, and she clasped her hands together toward the end of the song and kept them together for the remainder of the scene. Following the film, various artist renderings of this very scene started to appear on cardstock paper fans in Black churches all across the country courtesy of local mortuaries that would advertise their funeral services on the reverse side. Unlike the film images wherein Jackson sang with closed eyes and a wide-open mouth, the fan renderings depict Jackson with eyes open and mouth closed, but wearing the same blue choir robe with the same stain glass window above and behind her right shoulder. Her visage as depicted on the fans seems to combine the looks of hope and righteous indignation. In either case, her look is resolute. These fans were distributed for free to congregations, and this gospel-funeral image of Mahalia Jackson become part of the Black cultural iconography for generations of Black church attendees. Even after her own death in 1972, Jackson's image reproduced on church fans across the country became a symbol of the resolution previously offered by her voice and in this iteration with absolute stillness. The function of the fan, to cool congregants in hot churches that in many cases were without air conditioners, once again places an icon of female vocality in the servant position to soothe those

in discomfort. The function of the fan, like the function of the conic voice according to Griffin, offers the idea of resolution through temporary soothing.

Through the 1960s while the "queen" of gospel was establishing her own iconicity through funeral imagery, funeral performances, and a performance style that became less and less movement-filled over time, Marion Williams and other women performers were moving in a different direction. While Williams was never invited to sing at any national ceremonies and never achieved icon status, with movement and improvisation she practiced an alternative approach to heightened morality that was not limited by morbidity. Williams' performances constituted the "high stepping" celebration that the *Imitation of Life* character, Annie, wished for, but did not attain. The content of Marion Williams' signature song,"Packin Up" also anticipates death like "Precious Lord" and "Soon Ah Will Be Don" but encourages the body to move in opposition to death and dying. Despite Jackon's efforts to establish a more narrow scope for gospel music it was the dance-ready version of the form, which Fisk Jubilee Quartet, Golden Gate Quartet, and Marion Williams all embraced, that would circulate most widely for the rest of century and ultimately dominate representations of sacred Black music performance transnationally.

Chapter Three

"She Moves My Soul": Langston Hughes, Gospel Music, Women, and Theater

In 1926 a young Langston Hughes aligned "true Negro art in America"[1] with the religious folk form increasingly called gospel music. By 1966 Hughes had written a collection of gospel songs, five plays that heavily involved gospel music and introduced the term "gospel-song-play" to describe theatrical works with gospel music at the center of structure or content. Of these gospel plays, *Tambourines to Glory* became the first gospel musical to appear on Broadway and *Black Nativity* toured Europe between 1962 and 1965. Many theater and history scholars widely concede that Hughes "practically invented the genre of gospel plays"[2] and is largely responsible, though not solely, for the trend and tradition of gospel-themed musical plays produced and promoted by and for Black audiences.[3] However, in that forty year span between his early mention of religious folk music in relation to the true art of "dark-skinned" Negros and the international commercial success of touring gospel play productions, Hughes' regard for gospel music and for female gospel performers in particular was far from consistent. In part, my discussion builds upon and expands Emily Lord's idea of ambivalent gospel performance in

[1] Langston Hughes and George S. Schuyler, "Two "New Negroes" Discuss Negro Art in the "Nation"," *The New York Amsterdam News (1922-1938)*, 1926/06/23/ 1926.

[2] Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume Two: 1941-1967, I Dream a World* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

[3] Warren B. Burdine Jr, "The Gospel Musical and Its Place in the Black American Theatre C1998j," *A Sourcebook of African-American Performance: Plays, People, Movements* (1999).; Allen L. Woll, *Black Musical Theatre: From Coontown to Dreamgirls* (Cambridge Univ Press, 1989).

Black Resonance, and I suggest that ambivalence surrounding gospel music is often a recurring and ongoing phenomenon for both practitioners and witnesses. Through an examination of Langston Hughes' non-fiction writing alongside certain creative texts he wrote during this period, I am suggesting that Hughes was ambivalent toward both gospel music performance and the form's most prominent women practitioners who delivered highly theatrical performances. Secondly, I argue that a contrasting disposition toward gospel music performance in relation to theater is evident in the work of Vinnette Carroll who valued gospel music performance as folk tradition in her work consistently, employed the form to carve out new spaces within American musical theater for women practitioners and performers, and co-conceived the successful blend of gospel and theater that became a theater trend and tradition.

Vinnette Carroll, the West Indian woman who directed Hughes' *Black Nativity* and *Prodigal Son* as well as several more of her own conceptions, was the first (and only thus far) African descended woman to be nominated for a Tony award for directing. My analysis of Carroll's work surrounding gospel music in the second part of this chapter theorizes black feminism in terms of sexualized and racialized labor in performance and creative spaces informed by notions of precarity and reproductive labor. Extending my argument in chapter one that female gospel music performance labor parallels the domestic work associated with Black women in the U.S. historically, I argue that the work of the theater director traverses both public and private creative spaces in service to cultural production which is a form of social reproductive labor and that Vinnette Carroll worked to acknowledge the labor taking place in "black" and "feminine" spaces including her own.

A possible cause for the difference in regard for gospel music between the work of Hughes and Carroll might rest primarily in the distinctions between their roles as writer and

director respectively. With Hughes more engaged with text and Carroll more engaged with performing bodies, the function of gospel music would manifest its value differently for each. My approach here is start with a discussion of Hughes' text and then discuss Carroll's embodiment of text later in the chapter. In addition, gospel music performance went from a subcultural folk tradition to popular music entertainment within Carrolls' and Hughes' lifetimes. In the period between 1926 and 1966 gospel music developed as a commercial genre surpassing both Jazz and Blues in record sales and this emergence altered the capacity and function of the form in certain contexts for Hughes. Ultimately, Carroll and Hughes together introduced gospel music to theater in new ways. Carroll especially realized major success, but, at various points during the years of interest, there seem to be contradictions in Hughes' view of the form. While this chapter does not offer a history of gospel music, the objective in the beginning is to include some historical context of how the commercial success of gospel - especially for women practitioners - informed its function in Hughes' writing over time.

Hughes was exposed to "the music of the Holiness and Sanctified churches"[4] in Chicago neighborhoods when visiting his mother as a teenager.[5] He had previously experienced more dignified Black worship traditions at St. Luke's A.M.E. Church with his "Auntie" Reed when he was a boy in Lawrence.[6] Also in Lawrence with Reed he attended the Sunday "forum" held at Warren Street Baptist Church, which also drew members who were "poorer, more down-home" and "Southern" than the St. Luke's AME congregation. Unlike the more serene A.M.E.

[4] Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume Two: 1941-1967*, 27.

[5] Ibid., 234.

[6] Ibid., 27.

worshippers, the Baptists at Warren Street were "captured by the Holy Spirit" with "ecstatic groans and cries," and he witnessed his own aunt "transported"[7] this way. The Warren Street "forum," however, was a convening of the "university students and talented townsfolk gathered to sing and play classical music, recite poetry, read original essays and other compositions, and discuss the affairs of the day, especially as they affected The Race"; this gathering suggests that the Baptists, for Hughes, were inclusive of both high culture and down-home religion. The Chicago "Holiness and Sanctified" worship settings Hughes described also included Holy Ghost vocal expressions, but Hughes' accounts of these practices emphasized the music which "possessed a far greater intensity in stepped-up rhythms driven by fierce hand-clapping and wild tambourines" than the Baptists he had witnessed in conjunction with Black clergy who "showed off all the gifts of great actors."[8] This exposure to store-front church environments among working poor migrants from Southern states was very likely source of the religious images and sounds that Hughes referenced in the "Racial Mountain" essay:

> But then there are the low-down folks, the so-called common element, and they are the majority - may the Lord be praised! They live on Seventh Street in Washington or State Street in Chicago and they do not particularly care whether they are like white folks or anybody else. Their joy runs, bang! Into ecstasy. Their religion soars to a shout. […] These common people are not afraid of spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child. […] And many an upper class Negro church, even now, would not dream of employing a spiritual in its services. The drab melodies in white folks' hymn books are much to be preferred. "We want to worship the Lord correctly and quietly. We don't believe in shouting."[9]

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

The previous quotes gesture toward the class-based phenomenon of classical music including classical versions of spirituals performed in Black churches. This includes fully orchestrated "Sacred Music Concerts" since the 1820's that Eileen Southern chronicles in *The Music of Black Americans.* The rise of classical music in the churches founded in the late 1700s by African descended clergy corresponded with the rise of educated and middle class African descended people in the United States. Covering a century of religious uplift music before the 1920's Southern presents evidence that within the AME and Baptist churches, multiple forms of musicality were employed in worship services. Especially in northern centers like Philadelphia and in correlation with an increase in formal music education and literacy, concerts with fifty-piece orchestras were the preferred events for esteemed African American congregations. According to Jerma Jackson in *Singing in my soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age,* Black Christians would cling to classical arrangements as a way to "uplift" the race.

Middle class African Americans actively distanced themselves from images and sounds that resembled stereotypes found in holiness church music.[10] Subsequently, middle class African descended people took pride in watered-down "Negro" spirituals as performed by the Fisk Jubilee singers lead by a white conductor but openly expressed disdain for the affective music of holiness Churches, despite that fact that it was Black "folk" music.[11] Hughes' mentions are significant because he does not layer the cultural expression with notions of piety, or uplift, or consciousness toward a white audience. Hughes in his writing on "Negro Art" addresses this affirmation as he correlates one's ability to see Negro beauty with having a "low-down" or

[10] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." 1926," *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes* 9 (1773).

[11] Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume Two: 1941-1967*.

"common" social status, and indifference to white audience reception. The expression that exemplifies this aversion to assimilation for Hughes during the 1920s is the religious folk music increasingly called Gospel. By the 1930s this had already begun to change for Hughes and for gospel music.

Initially, the function of gospel music is symbolic for Hughes and he points to this religious Black expressive culture with high regard as an ideal form of Negro art because of its correlation to the "common" class. One of his earliest expressed views regarding religious folk music - which would soon be more widely known as gospel - is his association of the form with a "lower" social strata including lesser educated Negroes and this class association, for Hughes, seemed to qualify gospel music as true Negro art. This conveyance written in Hughes' 1926 article "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" appeared in *The Nation* Magazine, the United States' oldest left-leaning magazine, on June twenty-third and also the African American newspaper *New York Amsterdam News* at Hughes' insistence on the same day. The article is often quoted for its titular focus on "true Negro art" and the twenty-four year old Hughes ends the article with his ideal for Black cultural and artistic expression:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either.[12]

Less often mentioned are his claims in the same article toward social class and its influence on art and artists or the fact that the final phrases are immediately preceded by his bold rejection of middle class values suggesting that middle class sensibilities are incompatible with 'true Negro

[12] Jerma A. Jackson, *Singing in My Soul : Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

art.' Many theater and performance scholars re/present this article in terms of his pro-Black or Black-first ideals, yet the equal concern the article has with class is often understated or not stated at all. Hughes suggests consistently throughout the 2225-word article published at the height of the Harlem Renaissance positioning Hughes both on a national (white) mainstream platform and simultaneously in a paper that is 'of the people', that Black middle class social status works in *opposition* to 'true' Negro art.

Following the work of Lisa Thompson, I also agree with sociologists who "characterize middle-class African Americans as constituting both a social and economic category"[13] and therefore understand "class" stratifications through layers of performatives and performance. While Hughes' early emphasis is race and class, the work of Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis, Hazel Carby, Erica Edwards, Tricia Rose, Mignon Moore, and Lisa Thompson inform my understanding that gender and the regulation of Black female bodies in relation to sexuality have historically been linked to social delineations that manifest as class distinction. With this context, I find in Hughes' critique of the Black middle class in relation to art and culture both the explicit and implicit criticism of Black women.

Not only did Hughes repeatedly dismiss the notion that, "true Negro art" could ever come from one who does not see oneself as a Negro first, Hughes also put forth that it is more difficult for his ideal artist to come from a middle class home. In light of the middle class ideal that women were mothers, primary care givers, nurturers, and teachers, Hughes' dismay with the middle class rearing reveals an implicit disdain for the reproductive labor attributed to the women in middle class homes. Hughes gave anecdotal evidence of youth from middle class

[13] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music : Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*, 42, 43.

homes who were taught to love whiteness more than Blackness and were driven by a desire to *be* white and in the process Hughes explicitly criticized African American "society ladies." Hughes blames middle class socialization for "this urge within the race toward whiteness" and dares the "smug Negro middle class to turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimmer of their own beauty."[14] The repeated alignment of the "middle class" with the "home" - implicitly the woman's domain in this context - renders the possibility that Hughes' critique of the Black middle class was actually a critique of its women. While Hughes mentions jazz as well as blues in the close of his argument as an alternative to middle class values he dedicates more text in the center of his argument to gospel music heralding it as the marker "common"[15] Negro sensibilities.

By the 1930s, in juxtaposition to Black middle class cultural values, Hughes offers the cultural expression of "common folk" and highlights their "into a shout" religion as a shining example of a mode that is inward affirming. As time went on, however, these folk sounds and images were more often recorded and sold as Black religious music and culture helped to expand the record industry while creating new social strata for African American music performers. It is estimated that in the mid 1920s African Americans purchased six million discs annually and by 1930 close to eight thousand race record titles had been released and one thousand of those titles were gospel.[16] In 1926 the first "gospel beat" piano and gospel guitar music was recorded by Arizona Dranes and Blind Joe Taggart respectively. In 1927 the recorded preaching of J.M.

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[14] Jackson, *Singing in My Soul : Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age*.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain."

Gates "vastly" outsold Bessie Smith recordings and in 1932 Sallie Martin and Thomas Dorsey found a gospel singers convention in Chicago.[17] The ample supply of gospel performers met the increasing demand by gospel consumers but this did not exactly align with the "folk" practices that Hughes described in his "Racial Mountain" essay.

Along with the rapid commercialization of gospel music and its separation from cultural practice spaces and folk tradition through recording technology, Hughes expressed his disenchantment with religious practice in general. It should be noted of the 1926 "Racial Mountain" essay that Hughes named Chicago and Washington D.C. as locations for "shout" religious and cultural expression but not Harlem. By 1932 however Hughes also witnessed a different version of this religious expression in Harlem that soured his outlook of previously lauded practices. In his poem "Goodbye Christ" published in 1932 he critiques a Harlem preacher, Dr. George "big black" Becton, and Hughes also details the preaching performance of Becton in his autobiography *Big Blue Sea* criticizing Becton's "charlatan"[18] behavior. In addition, The "Goodbye Christ" poem also corresponds with his experiences in Russia where he was free to travel without race-based restriction prompting him to declare in 1932, "communism is more effective that religion."[19] From the poems and his non-fiction declarations it is clear that Hughes' disinterest in Christianity (or any religion) as a symbolic solution for Negro

[17] Allan Moore, *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[18] Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea : An Autobiography*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), 275.

[19] Lisa B. Thompson, *Beyond the Black Lady: Sexuality and the New African American Middle Class* (University of Illinois Press, 2009), 14.

consciousness or even ideal artistic expression coincides with his distrust of charismatic religious leadership by the early 1930s.

Also named in the "Goodbye Christ" poem is pastor Aimee McPherson, the woman who founded the Four Square church in Los Angeles. The poem indicts McPherson as one who has "made too much money" from religious performance. This mention is significant because years later when writing *Tambourines to Glory* as a musical comedy critique of Black churches and money-hungry charismatic leaders in Harlem, Hughes would choose to make the two swindler pastor characters women.[20] In spite of the fact that less than 5% of all pastors across all denominations have been women historically Hughes chose to over-represent women as religious charlatans in Harlem and this reiterates the literary tradition and religious belief that women, like Eve, are inherently untrustworthyand cunning by nature.[21]

Between the 1930s and 1950s, the growing number of mostly women professional gospel singers who became popular sensations within Black communities were no longer compatible with Hughes' literary image that associated folk religious music with either poverty or denigrated subculture. In conjunction with Hughes' uneasiness with profitable religious performance and charismatic practitioners, his initial association of religious music with "common" folk would be complicated further by the new - and often fleeting - celebrity surrounding Black performance, including gospel, fueled by radio and the recording industry.

[20] Leslie Catherine Sanders, ""I've Wrestled with Them All My Life": Langston Hughes's Tambourines to Glory" (1991).

[21] Wallace Best, "'The Spirit of the Holy Ghost Is a Male Spirit': African American Preaching Women and the Paradoxes of Gender," *Women and religion in the African diaspora: Knowledge, power, and performance* (2006). Wallace Best addresses the distrust of female pastors and shares insight on strategies Chicago Black women pastors used in the 1930s and 40s to navigate that distrust.

Hughes called attention to a dichotomy between commercial exploiters of Black culture and the artists who produced Black culture in his 1940 poem "Note on Commercial Theatre." In the poem, Hughes writes in the first person and personifies "Black and beautiful" as someone who makes an accusation against commercial entertainment surrounding the theft and distortion of blues and spirituals.[22] The accuser almost concludes with a mere hope to attain cultural justice for the violation once "somebody" stands up as a witness on the writer's behalf: "But someday somebody'll Stand up and talk about me, And write about me— Black and beautiful— And sing about me, And put on plays about me!" But in the final phrases Hughes writes, "I reckon it'll be Me myself! Yes, it'll be me"[23] as he understand himself capable of being believed, capable of defending himself, and capable of representing himself. The fact that Hughes wrote as a male subject that would put on plays about himself is complicated by the fact that his most well known plays, *Tambourines to Glory* and *Black Nativity*, were about women and and presented by women. Hughes' prophetic poem would manifest itself beyond the masculine authorship he most likely imagined, and this disjuncture is related to his ambivalence toward women gospel music practitioners.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s Hughes published both fiction and non-fiction works addressing the shift in gospel music performance related to the professionalization and

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[22] Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume I, 1902-1941: I, Too, Sing America*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2001), 381.; You've taken my blues and gone— You sing 'em on Broadway And you sing 'em in Hollywood Bowl, And you mixed 'em up with symphonies And you fixed 'em So they don't sound like me. Yep, you done taken my blues and gone. […] But someday somebody'll Stand up and talk about me, And write about me— Black and beautiful— And sing about me, And put on plays about me! I reckon it'll be Me myself! Yes, it'll be me.

[23] Ibid.

commercialization of the form. One tension permeating the works is the conflict between the aesthetic of "common folk" on one hand, and the "theater" aesthetic of professional mostly women gospel performers on the other. He writes, "nowadays the theater has invaded the church and the church has taken over various aspects of show business"[24] and the article not only reveals a shift in the social symbolism of gospel music for Hughes, but serves as evidence that women were at the center of professional gospel performance and also at the center of his critique. Hughes attended several gospel concerts in Harlem and Chicago and published his observations of the events. In his 1947 commentary about gospel music performance in Harlem titled, "Church, Theatre and Gospel Songs," Hughes offered descriptions and some analysis of the increasingly prevalent theatricality of gospel music performance by women in terms of visual representation, distinctions in vocal style, performance movement, and performance space locations.

In terms of visual representation Hughes first notes the emergence of gospel sheet music covers with photo images of the performers. Hughes suggests that this commercial practice was "borrowed from Broadway" and goes on to describe five examples of covers and song titles all featuring women: "Four lively looking young ladies, the Jackson Singers […] Sallie Martin with Kenneth Morris at the piano […] Augusta Vance with a cross about her neck […] Emma Jackson Craig charming a white robe […] the five lovely brown skins of the Golden Harps Quartette."[25] Hughes does not actually offer an opinion to correspond with the five descriptions but his textual representation indexes the female body to mark the tension, for Hughes, of "lively," "young" and

[24] Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain."

[25] William Barlow, *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (Temple University Press, 1999), 19.

"lovely" female bodies being associated with sacred music performance. These images are in contrast with a maternal and non-sexual femininity that was expected of women in religious spaces during that era according to Wallace Best.[26] Unlike previous images of religious choruses like the Jubillee singers and their many emulators, these women did not simply blend-in as chorus members or congregants in a folk setting. There is a tension within the texts between the expectation for female religious performers to be maternal and pious versus the exuberant performances of non-maternal women who enact what Jayna Brown describes as a refusal to behave discussed in the previous chapter.[27]

Beyond their aesthetic, maternal or not, the very presence of the female body as focal point first in photographs and then in Hughes' own text disrupts the symbolic potential for gospel music as the sound of "low-down folks" that he previously heralded in the "Racial Mountain" essay. In the essay, Hughes uses the phrases "their individuality" and "our individual dark-skinned selves" to refer to a collectively distinct type of Negro expression based on recurring Negro experiences. However, as Hazel Carby has argued, understandings of collective racial identity have repeatedly been gendered male or centered on male experience and male leadership. Carby draws attention to assumptions by race leaders including W.E.B. Du Bois that race identities are inextricable from the formation of masculine identities and suggests that this

[26] Langston Hughes and George Schuyler, "For Your Scrapbook: news..... Summary Whe Afro-American May 20, 1933 One Whole Page Devoted to 3-Day Conference on Economic Status of the Negro, Sponsored by the Rosenwald Fund, Including Dr. Dubois's Speech in Full and Also a Resume of Other Addresses. Baltimore," *Afro-American (1893-1988)*, 1933/05/20/ 1933.

[27] Charles Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church since Frazier* (Schocken Books, 1974).

notion is rarely questioned.[28] In this light, with the very identity of Negro gendered male, it might follow that a disjuncture occurred for Hughes when women emerged at the artistic center of the music he imagined as "true" Negro music. Although Hughes proved to be more progressive than many of his antecedents and, at least on one occasion, included women leaders when considering those who could be the "Voice to speak to us, and for us,"[29] meaning the race, women in performance spaces or those performing professionally would continue to be problematic for Hughes.

In the same 1947 "Church, Theater, and Gospel Songs" article Hughes also offers his analysis of gospel music vocal styles with a comparison of two performers who are both women. Hughes collapses the range of vocal performance possibilities into his binary, "a simple style and a complicated style, a sweet style and a hollering style,"[30] and asserts that he himself prefers a style that is simple and sweet. As exemplary of Hughes' preferred performance mode he named the vocalist Princess Stewart. Stewart sang gospel and opera, and was at one point considered a protégée to Marion Anderson. Hughes recalls the first time he heard Princess Stewart but his description of her "simple and sweet" performance is supplanted with the critique of another woman on the same program. The other woman was "a frowning, intent looking, little thin lady

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[28] Hazel V. Carby. Race Men (W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures) (Kindle Locations 55-57). Kindle

[29] Hughes, "Church, Theatre and Gospel Songs.":"One need is leadership: a Voice to speak to us, and for us; a new Frederick Douglass thundering across the land; a new Harriet Tubman … a new Sojourner Truth, unafraid…. Where is the Voice that will awaken the man in the cotton fields, the woman in the kitchen, the laborer in the cities? … Or are we all too educated to give a damn about the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed? … Who cares? Does anybody? I mean, enough to make the world know it."

[30] Best, "'The Spirit of the Holy Ghost Is a Male Spirit'."

who could holler like a bull" causing the walls of the church to shake and based on this description was most likely a performer from the Holiness "shout" tradition. Concluding his description of the nameless singer, who hollered so loud people heard her two blocks away, Hughes conceded that while "some folks liked her," he did not. The religion that, "soars into a shout" was no longer praise worthy by Hughes once female bodies dominated to practice and therefore rendered the form incapable of representing the race.

Hughes' critique of vocal style follows a similar critique of performance style in the same text regarding concert sensation Rosetta Tharpe, an African American gospel rock-and-roll guitarist from the Pentecostal or "Holiness" tradition who performed internationally in secular spaces and was later credited by the Beatles as a primary influence. Hughes comments on the spaces where she has chosen to perform, or, the location of her female body, and while Hughes praises the virtuosity of Rosetta Tharpe for her "gusto and rhythms," he does not appreciate "the use of spirituals in a nightclub." Although intrigued by church-as-theatre, and theater within the church he concluded that Hughes explains that he did "not always respect her taste." Far from his "Racial Mountain" celebration of those whose "religion soars into a shout" and his desire with other artists to express themselves "without fear or shame," Hughes actively participates in shaming Sister Tharpe for her lack of propriety. While Hughes also takes s stand again male musicians who "swing" the gospel hymns, his critique of Tharpe had more to do with the location and comportment of her female body.

Although Hughes did not favor gospel performances by women who hollered like bulls, lacked certain decorum, or performed in secular "pleasure" locations, he occasionally praises singer Mahalia Jackson in some of his fiction and non-fiction writing between the late 1940s and the 1950s. In one case Hughes' fictional character, called Simple, celebrates Jackson for using

vernacular language when singing as opposed to the exaggerated pronunciation or foreign language performances of classical concert vocalists.[31] It seems that Jackson's use of vernacular language, even without the shouting associated with Holiness traditions, is enough to warrant Hughes' praise, but he does not describe her performances as "true" Negro art. In another example Hughes, writing as himself, includes Mahalia Jackson in a list of "wonderful women I would like to know better" because, he writes, "she moves my soul."[32] Hughes resists aligning Jackson's performance with the actual identity of the race, but he goes on to employ her performance in service to himself. By including Jackson on his list of women he'd like to know better, he frames her performance as gendered service and her work as gendered labor in a way that is consistent with the discussion in the previous chapter concerning Black female vocality as service. While Jackson as a woman is not qualified within Hughes' writing to represent the race, she is however qualified to carry out the gendered affect labor of moving a man's soul.

Jackson's aesthetic during this time was more maternal and asexual than young and "lively," and one reviewer described her style of performance during this period as lacking "spontaneity and religious fervor" as she stood wearing a simple gown. Perhaps Mahalia's comportment signaled "the Amen shouters and the ones who 'feel' the gospel"[33] to be on their best behavior. Jackson's performance in this instance conformed to the middle class standard for both performance and performativity. Jackson's controlled performance style and asexual aesthetic reflected the decorum and respectability that would have been consistent with the

[31] Brown, *Babylon Girls*.

[32] Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 1.

[33] Hughes, "Church, Theatre and Gospel Songs."

performative behavior that Lisa Thompson suggests as the prevailing expectation for Black middle class women historically. Jackson's controlled performance also follows previous standards set for "race" performance during the Harlem renaissance by leaders including W.E.B Du Bois.[34]

While Jackson in one sense followed a similar path of distinction constructed earlier through the Robeson narrative during the 1920s and 1930s, and was very careful to publicly state and enact the boundaries of her own performance (at least later in her life), a key difference is that women performers of *any* kind in the 1920s and 1930s were hardly considered respectable at all.[35] While W.E.B. Du Bois was helping to construct a narrative surrounding Black identity through male achievement and performance, women were not considered key contributors; women performers like blues singer Bessie Smith who exhibited female sexuality and a non-maternal aesthetic might have been considered liabilities to the uplift project.

Following several decades of racial uplift projects that centered men performers and intellectuals, women like Marion Anderson and Mahalia Jackson might mark a next-wave uplift project that included women and also heralded female performance but only those with "controlled" expressive culture contributions. In a similar way (but not identical) to the manner in which Paul Robeson's performance was posited as antithetical to Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter's folk performance, Jackson's and Anderson's performances existed in deliberate

[34] Ibid. The connection between "controlled" musical expression and respectability surrounding Black masculinity is taken up by Hazel Carby in *Race Men* with a critical juxtaposition of Paul Robeson, the "controlled" concert singer, and Ledbetter who was presented as animalistic and criminal by those credited with his discovery

[35] "Simple Is No Patron of the Arts; Loves Music He Can Understand," *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967)*, 1948/12/11/ 1948.

contrast to the more spontaneous performances of the "Blues Women" who preceded them. In addition, Jackson and Anderson performed in contrast to their contemporaries who were professional female gospel performers including Marion Williams, and Clara Ward whose performances included running through the aisles and using audience members' personal items as props in their theatrical performances.

This understanding of gender and performance during these decades sheds light on Langston Hughes' ambivalence toward gospel music and the female performers at its center in the 1940s and 1950s. In his 1926 discussion of "shout" gospel performance, Hughes initially understood gospel music and corresponding folk religious performance as symbolic of the "race" and therefore, like many of his era, inherently masculine.[36] I am also suggesting that, in the 1926 essay, he understood this inherently male performance of race to be in conflict with middle class sensibilities that were seemingly promulgated by Black middle class women in domestic spaces.[37] In the 1930s and 1940s, however, women emerged as the primary professional performers of gospel music - in correlation with the fact that women constituted the majority of performers in vernacular spaces for generations, even if they did not hold a proportional number of leadership positions.[38] Hughes' views shifted with the boon of professional women gospel singers and was suddenly more comfortable with women practitioners who had more

[36] "Some Wonderful Women I Would Like to Know Better Include," *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967)*, 1953/03/14/ 1953.

[37] Melvin Tapley, "Mahalia Brought Warm Glow to Audience on Cold Night," *New York Amsterdam News (1943-1961), City edition*, 1957/02/16/ 1957.

[38] Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men*, The W E B Du Bois Lectures (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).; Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism : Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

"controlled" performance styles rather than those who exhibited the "ecstasy" he first described and admired in a "common" church congregation setting.

Mahalia Jackson was firmly established as a gospel music star, and national icon, and what Lisa Thompson describes as a "Black Lady" by the early 1950s, and Hughes hoped to include her in a theatrical gospel production. Jackson appeared on multiple programs with Hughes between 1956 and 1959 including a concert at Hunter College in New York, and another at Orchestra Hall in Chicago.[39] During this time Hughes had several of his poems converted to gospel songs with the help of church musician Jobe Huntley, then made these songs the basis for a play he wrote and envisioned as Broadway musical, *Tambourines to Glory*.[40] On July 14, 1956 Hughes completes the play, *Tambourines to Glory* and describes the work as a "Play with Spirituals, Jubilees, and Gospel Songs"[41] and "an urban-folk-Harlem-genre-melodrama" but it would take seven more years for *Tambourines* to launch on Broadway.[42] Hughes had requested that Jackson sing the gospel songs he had written and that she perform as the star of the "gospel-song-play" that would be a full musical theater production. Jackson refused.

In 1960 Hughes' explains, while promoting previews for a Chicago performance of *Tambourines*, that Jackson declined because "her religious principals prevent her from appearing in a theater"[43] revealing her belief that theater spaces are indeed *pleasure* spaces. Theaters were

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[39] Carby, *Race Men*.

[40] Tambourine to Glory

[41] Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain."

[42] Ibid

[43] Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton University Press, 2013).

considered unacceptable locations for respectable female bodies according to Jackson. At the Newport Jazz festival Jackson would only agree to perform on Sunday (which meant 12:00am on Saturday night).[44] Jackson's public refusal is a reiteration of the way that Black middle class women have sometimes had to demonstrate control over their bodies' location and comportment in order to maintain middle class distinction in the social sense.[45] Ironically, the vey Black middle class woman sensibility that Hughes first regarded with disdain in "Racial Mountain," then later revered in his praise for Mahalia, is the same posture that required Mahalia to refuse Hughes' request to "put on a play" about the "common" women performers whose taste he did "not always respect."[46]

In 1961, however, Hughes would once again herald those whose "religion soars into a shout," including one very exuberant female gospel performer from the Pentecostal tradition, Marion Williams. Gary Kramer, the music industry executive who had become Williams' manager, commissioned Langston Hughes to write a play based on the songs from Marion Williams' Christmas album.[47] Kramer had been an Atlantic record executive as well as an executive at Billboard magazine and, undoubtedly, before moving into the management of gospel artist management, saw how lucrative the gospel music genre had become. Kramer had approached the Pentecostal "shout" performer Williams, after she left The Clara Ward singers

[44] Hughes, L. (1958, Aug 16). Week by week. *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*

[45] Sanders, ""I've Wrestled with Them All My Life": Langston Hughes's Tambourines to Glory."

[46] Robert Cromie, "The Bystander," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, 1960/07/24/ 1960.

[47] Tapley, "Mahalia Brought Warm Glow to Audience on Cold Night."

with whom she had been singing, recording and touring as an unnamed and unpictured lead vocalist for eleven years since the age of nineteen. The Clara Ward singers, with Williams as the lead singer on their most commercially successful songs, was an all female group who had gained a reputation for highly theatrical performances and maintained an aggressive touring schedule that had in previous decades been the domain of male groups only.

Marion Williams certainly would not have been considered a "Black Lady" and her vocal and dance performance, while completely acceptable in the Pentecostal "shout" traditions, were denigrated in the second-wave of uplift that privileged controlled female performance. Marion Williams was the perfect match for Hughes' theater vision to "put on plays" based on Spirituals because of her theatrical "shout" performance style. Williams was the daughter of a singing street evangelist and came from the same Pentecostal tradition as Rosetta Tharpe. Surrounding Williams' song performance, Hughes employed New Testament Bible verses to construct the script. Hughes insisted that Vinnette Carroll be brought in to direct the play that would eventually be called *Black Nativity*.[48]

Black Nativity, premiered off-Broadway on 41st street with plans for limited Holiday performances in 1962.[49] The play's narrator spoke Hughes' while the singers and dancers rendered the action of the play as directed by Vinnette Carroll. The singers were professional recording artists and touring performers who sang tradition gospel Christmas songs, but unlike other productions, which had presented gospel music in a supporting role only, the singers were

[48] Edward Franklin Frazier et al., *The Negro Church in America* (Schocken Books New York, 1974).

[49] "Hampton Jazz Festival Opens with Gospel Music," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973)*, 1969/06/25/ 1969.

featured performers and featured throughout the entire production. According to reviews published during the initial run in the *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Black Nativity* "marks the first time that professional gospel singers have been integrated into the action of the play."[50] *Black Nativity* was surprisingly successful having such favorable reviews and attendance that the run extended weeks beyond the Yule season. The cast included: Marion Williams and the Stars of Faith, Princess Stewart, and Professor Alex Bradford and the Bradford Singers.[51] In reviews Hughes is credited with being "the first writer to give gospel singing a format in which it can be presented in other than concert form."[52] When *Black Nativity* was booked for the Two-Worlds Festival of the Arts in Spoletto, Italy in June of 1962, those performances sparked a European and U.S. tour that lasted three years with numerous television appearances for the cast in both the U.S. and Europe.[53]

However, in the same way that the speaker in Hughes' "Note on Commercial Theater" poem ultimately resists the idea of "somebody" else speaking on his behalf, the key women practitioners of *Black Nativity*, namely Marion Williams and Vinnette Carroll, also seemed to resist Hughes' noble intention to speak on their behalf and they move toward representing

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[50] Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume Two: 1941-1967*.

[51] Marion Williams (previously of the Clara Ward Singers) is cast as the lead vocalist while the more-famous Clara Ward was cast as the lead in Tambourines to Glory, and Princess Stewart is a blind singer that Hughes mentions as enjoyable in his 1947 article about church and theater.

[52] Thompson, *Beyond the Black Lady: Sexuality and the New African American Middle Class*.

[53] "New Hughes Play Will Premiere in Brooklyn," *New Pittsburgh Courier (1959-1965), National edition*, 1962/10/13/ 1962.

themselves rather than following the text Hughes had scripted to represent them. Carroll and Williams were not confined to Hughes' text, or the biblical narrative upon which it is based, and they contest elements of the nativity story as well as the Nativity Scene.

Womanist Insubordination and Reproductive Labor

Vinnette Carroll, the West Indian woman who directed Hughes' *Black Nativity* and *Prodigal Son* as well as several more of her own conceptions, was the first (and only thus far) African descended woman to be nominated for a Tony award for directing. Carroll's work surrounding theater and gospel music exemplifies racialized and gendered labor in performance and creative spaces informed by notions of precarity and reproductive labor. The work of the theater director traverses both public and private creative spaces in service to cultural production, and is therefore is a form of social reproductive labor with nurturative components. In this way, Carroll's work is in conversation with Chapter One assertions that female gospel music performance labor is partly constituted by the domestic work associated with Black women in the U.S. through the mid twentieth century. Vinnette Carroll was acutely aware of service based occupational identities grafted onto the bodies of Black women historically, and worked to acknowledge the commonly hidden labor or "dirty work" taking place in "black" and "feminine" spaces including those in which she herself worked.

Black Nativity is a work in conversation with both the narrative of Jesus' birth to a virgin and also the aesthetics and inherent relational structures within the Nativity Scene. In *Black Nativity* and in other works, Carroll and Williams create, enact and perform counter narratives that contest masculine conception myths and single authorship, as well as racially gendered labor divisions. Vinnette Carroll countered those notions with her interpretation of *Black Nativity* and

other works through dance and music including gospel. A look at Carroll's work as a director and artistic director beyond *Black Nativity* reveals that the work of theater directors, and theater crews more broadly, can be understood as an example of racialized social reproductive labor that reiterates relational inequality in certain contexts.

The infinitely re-staged scene of Jesus' birth, complete with three strangers from afar who hover over parents-with-child as they all share space with livestock in a dingy barn, is a production that rests entirely upon the unseen act of Immaculate Conception. According to scripture, the only reason that Mary's virgin body was able to produce the Christ-child is because the act of conception itself did not actually involve any sexual exchange between human bodies. The impregnated woman played no active role whatsoever, and a sovereign father planted the human seed. This paradigm, when applied to secular forms of production, including knowledge production, supports the notion of ideas being conceived from a singular dominant masculine creative source that is credited with ultimate authorship. Concurrently, however, the subordinate feminine body within the paradigm is responsible for working to nourish the concept, laboring to produce the evidence of said conception, and laboring to care for and sustain that which has been conceived. In this light, the Nativity Scene or manger scene, with the religious image of Mary and her immaculately conceived child, reinforces gendered divisions of labor in terms of social reproduction and also signals gendered expectations in terms of women's roles in intellectual conception, knowledge production, and the formation of ideas. My interest here is the reproductive labor required to create, develop, and sustain ideas in the process of conception, and how the Nativity Scene, reliant on Immaculate Conception, excludes women from the roles of creator and author.

Additionally, Immaculate Conception is widely understood to have been a clean, precise, absolute and unilateral act by a non-human spirit upon a clean and virtuous female body, who remains clean and virtuous even after giving birth in a stable. While the Nativity Scene does portray Mary's clean and still female body giving care labor as she holds the child in her arms, the scene does not reveal the messy, unpleasant, and often unpredictable aspect of reproductive labor. The virgin mother remains composed and still with a quiet newborn in total tranquility. The Nativity Scene, with the absence of dirty labor or movement, exemplifies the necessity for dirty work to remain invisible so that virtuous women can remain clean. In this way, a Nativity Scene in the U.S. during the early to mid twentieth century reiterated the notion that feminized care labor is clean and virtuous while racialized care labor, the non-nurturative "dirty work" disproportionately performed by ethnic women during that era should remain invisible. In *Black Nativity,* and in additional works, Vinnette Carroll counters the archetype of Immaculate Conception and the coded meanings of the Nativity Scene so that both paradigms give way to womanist insubordination, embodied authorship in the process of idea development, the practices of co-conception and collaboration, unhidden reproductive labor, and the resistance of racially gendered labor identities.

Countering Racially Gendered Labor Identities

The first layer of resistance to racialized notions of care labor[54] is Carroll's casting decision, in conjunction with playwright Langston Hughes, to have an actor of African descent embody the role of the holy Madonna. In *Black Nativity*, Mary is Black. This is also the case for

[54] See previous chapter for a discussion of racialized care labor.

Joseph, the shepherds, and "what are you going to name that pretty little"[55] baby Jesus - who has sometimes been played by an actual infant in *Black Nativity* productions However, my emphasis here is Mary because within the Nativity Scene, which grew in popularity in the United States after World War I.[56] Perhaps in conjunction with a post-war construction of national identity, the image of an Anglo-looking Mary is widely regarded as the icon of perfect Christian motherhood and also often understood as perfect *woman*hood.[57]

By casting a Black woman in this role, Carroll and Hughes assert that Black women, too, are capable of Christian motherhood and womanhood even though a disproportionate amount of Black women in the 1960s were professional caregivers of children who were not their own.[58] Historically, Black women who filled the role of "mammy, rather than mommy"[59] were not naturally perceived as mothers and as Koritha Mitchell argues this discrepancy were addressed in

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[55] "'Black Nativity': Hughes' Play Slated for 41st Theatre," *New Pittsburgh Courier (1959-1965), National edition*, 1961/12/09/ 1961.

[56] "Nativity Hottest," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973)*, 1962/12/04/ 1962.

[57] Ibid.

[58] "Hughes on African Trip," *New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993)*, 1962/06/16/ 1962.; Patricia Hill Collins suggests that this move is a recurring strategy against oppression for Black women across time periods.; Marion Williams et al., *Black Nativity [Sound Recording]* (S.l.: : Vee-Jay Records,), p. 1 sound disc : 33 1/3 rpm, mono. ; 12 in.; Norman Dorsen and Charles Sims, "Nativity Scene Case: An Error of Judgment, The," *U. Ill. L. Rev.* (1985).; *Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, 2nd ed., Routledge Classics (New York: Routledge, 2009).*; Janet L. Dolgin, "Religious Symbols and the Establishment of a National Religion," *Mercer L. Rev.* 39 (1987).;

[59] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

the early 1900s through dramas written by women like Angelina Grimke.[60] Black drama in the Grimke context, which was mostly performed at readings in homes and printed in publications, was one location where women playwrights constructed new identities for Black women by presenting them as good Christian mothers, to justify the notion that Black women are worthy of citizenship and human rights. Concerning women, Langston Hughes' and Carroll's idea to present a Black version of the sacred Mother with child decades later in some ways recalls and builds upon this function for Black drama, including closet dramas, in previous eras. However, Vinnette Carroll interpreted the Hughes' text, which was loosely based on scripture, in a way that was more congruent with feminist oppositions as well as the emerging Black Arts Movement of the 1960s. Carroll destabilized and de-centered Mary and motherhood, which changed Mary's orientation within the Nativity Scene paradigm.

One way that Carroll de-centered Mary and motherhood was by shifting the structure of the Hughes textso that Mary and child only appear in Act One of the play. This shift resulted in a birth event that is not connected to the climax or conclusion of the performance, so that the women characters convey meaning beyond the act of motherhood.[61] In Carroll's version, the play begins with Mary, but the familiar Nativity Scene is not offered as an ending resolution. There is no promise for "peace on earth" in connection with Mary or motherhood. In contrast, Carroll's *Black Nativity* ends with Marion Williams singing *Packing Up*, which is a song that

[60] Ibid.

[61] I am deducing this from secondary sources. In the next phase of my research for this project I will review Hughes and Carroll archival documents and go more in depth on how Hughes' original version was changed.

indexes a happier life after death without any indication that peace on earth can or will be achieved.

Carroll destabilized Mary as an icon with her decision to endow Mary with motion rather than position her as a figure within a stilled tableau, which would have merely reiterated the Nativity Scene. In Carroll's *Black Nativity*, rather than an actor, a highly skilled dancer plays the role of Mary who moves away from the stillness associated with iconicity as discussed of Marion Williams in the previous chapter. With the role performed by a dancer, Mary's body is rendered capable of expression in ways that counter her lack of expression in both the text of Hughes' bible-based narrative and in the visual codes of the Nativity Scene. Unlike the widely recognized Madonna, Mary's dancing Black body in Carroll's version is not reduced to pristine care labor, and her womanhood is not incapacitated by maternity. Also because the Black female was widely understood to be "inherently" capable of all forms of reproductive labor including the physical and "dirty work" that causes one to toil and sweat, the possibilities for Mary are instantly expanded when embodied by a woman of African descent, and further expanded by the kinetic narrative of Mary's black dancing body.

Embodied Authorship

It was Carroll's creative decision - her idea - to incorporate expert dance, which did not seem to be part of the original Hughes script or vision. Carroll understood that movement and dance offered narrative possibilities for Mary that were not offered in the text, biblical or otherwise. Dance was especially important in *Black Nativity* because, according to New Testament writers, Mary had no dialog, and therefore no voice, and was presented as a virtuous yet subordinate vessel whose only identity was motherhood. The original choreographer for

Black Nativity was Alvin Ailey who had worked with Carroll the previous year on her production of *Dark of the Moon* featuring Cicely Tyson. Ailey was also slated to play the role of Joseph alongside Carmen de Lavallade, a Metropolitan Opera dancer who was to play Mary. The pair left the production before opening night and Mabel Robinson who was a professional dancer with Martha Graham Dance Company and first-time actor played Mary instead.[62] The inclusion of highly trained dancers in Carroll's version of the production was consistent with her actor training that emphasized movement. Throughout her directing work in previous and subsequent productions, dance and movement were as important as spoken dialog, music, and song.

Unfortunately, although many of Carroll's adjustments to Hughes' initial concept are reflected in the text - she cut much of the original dialog - the final published text of *Black Nativity* has no stage directions and does not indicate dance anywhere in the play. Some subsequent productions of *Black Nativity* only reflect the published text and are performed without dancers.[63] In those productions, Mary and Joseph are more like a living Nativity Scene and primarily serve as a motionless focal point surrounded by singers. Still, many Black theater companies that produce Black Nativity as a cultural tradition rely on Carroll's version, and highly trained dancers rather than actors play the roles of Mary and Joseph. One example of this

[62]Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.; Ailey and D Lavallade, however, left the production after Hughes, who had been employing the word Black for African descended people for decades before it was widely accepted as an appropriate identity term, changed the name of the play from *What a Might Day* to *Black Nativity*. The new dancers with very little time to rehearse, might have improvised much of their initial performance

[63] I witnessed such a production in 2010 at the Loraine Hansberry Theater in San Francisco where a version of Black Nativity had been performed for thirty consecutive years. In most versions, the music was modified to include newer gospel selections by local practitioners. In 2012, highly skilled professional dancers were absent from the cast in the cast.

production approach reflecting Carroll's concept for the play has taken place annually in North Carolina and is directed by Mabel Robinson, the dancer who played Mary in the original 1961 production.[64]

In Robinson's version she wanted the dancer representing Mary to convey the precarious yet "blessed" condition in which Mary has found herself. Robinson understands Mary to be afraid, insecure, and cognizant of the fact that her son must later be sacrificed. For the dancer who was portraying Mary, she suggested that, "all of that emotion has to come up" so audiences "can feel compassion for her." With some contrast, in the 2012 production that Robinson directed, the dancer in the role of Mary understood her narrative as "a journey to find her place - as a young woman, a young wife, a young mother" inferring that she had some level of autonomy.[65] In a 2013 version also directed by Robinson, a journalist describes, "This kinetic Mary, danced by Kennethia Mason, is no mild-mannered maiden. She thrashes and bucks and fights for her life and her child."[66] Interpretations in this mode have become a widespread tradition for the annual performance in many Black theater companies even though the text itself does not suggest dance or movement in any form.

This current tradition stems from Carroll who, without relying exclusively on Hughes' text, brought dance into *Black Nativity* in a way that exemplifies embodied authorship. Dancers and choreographers were free to offer more than just an interpretation of an existing narrative;

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[64] Lynn Felder, "'A New Feeling and Energy' for 'Black Nativity'," Winston-Salem Journal, http://www.journalnow.com/relishnow/the_arts/performing_arts/a-new-feeling-and-energy-for-black-nativity/article_a51a45b6-3f49-11e2-8bb9-001a4bcf6878.html.

[65] Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume Two: 1941-1967*.

[66] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

they were able to offer new narratives for Black bodies while disrupting the Nativity Scene paradigm for womanhood. This is true not only for the dancers, but true as well for the vocalists like Marion Williams who employed movement and improvised vernacular dance as a form of narrative. As partly discussed in the previous chapter, Williams rendered highly theatrical enactments of her songs especially her signature song *Packing Up*. She would move through the aisles dancing while gathering the personal items of church and concertgoers as props to demonstrate the extended "leaving" that is living with heightened mortality. This song was written into the *Black Nativity* script as the finale song. However, this embodied narrative as well as the text scripted for Williams to speak to introduce the song were part of Williams' performance mode for over a decade before she performed in *Black Nativity*. In fact, it was Williams' performance style and recent Christmas album that had inspired her manager to contact Langston Hughes and commission the play with his poetry around her music and theatrical style.[67]

Langston Hughes had been discussing gospel music performances for decades before *Black Nativity* premiered in 1961 and had been working on *Tambourines to Glory for the* seven years prior. Still, Hughes' first and only Broadway musical titled *Tambourines to Glory* is widely considered a commercial and critical failure lasting only three weeks. Carroll was not involved with *Tambourines*, and of the five gospel song-plays that Hughes is credited for writing, the only two that garnered any success, *Black Nativity* and *Prodigal Son*, were both directed and significantly modified by Carroll.[68]

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[67] "Music-Phonograph Merchandising: Kramer Forms Jubilee Artists; Gospel Show Due," *Billboard Music Week (Archive: 1961-1962)*, 1961/12/04/ 1961.

[68] Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume Two: 1941-1967*.

Vinnette Carroll developed the concept for *Black Nativity* in conjunction with Marion Williams and through an authoring process that included both Black women's bodies *and* Black women's ideas. Carroll continued this form of collaborative authorship toward a dozen subsequent productions gaining three 'Best Director' Tony nominations between *Dont Bother Me, I Cant Cope* (1972) and *Your Arms Are Too Short to Box with God* (1975). Following her work with Hughes, she took on the title *conceiver* in program credits and publicity documents in addition to her title of director.[69] For most of the those works, Carroll collaborated with songwriter Micki Grant who was a young woman in the theater company Carroll founded, the Urban Arts Corps. I interpret Carroll's self identification as *conceiver* to be in direct conversation and contestation to the paradigm of Immaculate Conception discussed previously in relation to the development of ideas, and the labor of said development, by racially gendered women.

Co-conception

I employ the term *co-conception* to describe what I find to be a Black womanist process for developing ideas across time, minds and bodies that is exemplified by Carroll's collaborations with Williams, Grant, Robinson, and others. My use of the term co-conception builds upon and departs from notions of "cocreation" already employed by some cultural theorists including George Lipsitz with Daniel Fischlin to describe collaborative efforts like jazz

[69] Micki Grant et al., *Dont Bother Me, I Cant Cope: [Program. Jul. 1973] Jul. 1973]* (New York, N.Y.: Metromedia, Inc., 1973).

improvisation.[70] While compatible with a cocreation framework, co-conception is distinct from that framework in three ways. Co-conception as a framework values difference among collaborators including differences of age, race, sex, history, or skill set; co-conception allows for collaborative labor that is inclusive of leaders and leadership - democratic and otherwise; and most importantly, co-conception acknowledges the non-rational, spiritual, material and trans-temporal contributions that precede creative expressions made audible and visible in a given moment. In other words, co-conception draws attention to both the origins leading up to a "new" collaboration by actively making visible the foundational concepts contributed by antecedents and ancestors, as well as the reproductive labor by those who surround and actively support the creative process over time.

Vinnette Carroll employed the term "conceiver" alongside the consistent acknowledgement of her highly visible collaborations to indicate non-masculinst authorship. I understand non-masculinist authorship to mean that which is nonsingular and not necessarily absolute. To be clear, when Carroll was listed in playbills, album liner notes, and publicity documents as "conceiver," her credits were always in tandem with those of persons, most often Micki Grant, who were credited for the music and text to clearly mark the collaborative process between them, and she openly praised them for their contributions. Carroll's title appeared in print not as a way to establish herself as the dominant contributor, but instead she used the term to mark her own reproductive labor in a way that was not normally acknowledged by existing language for the authorship of theater works

[70] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

In *Black Nativity* and beyond, Carroll's contributions did not qualify her as playwright even though she (re)structured the entire play. Carroll was much more than a director who interpreted text because she re-scripted the works completely through restructuring or contributed the ideas upon which the plays themselves were scripted. Langston Hughes had insisted that producers of Black Nativity hire Carroll after seeing her version of *Dark is the Moon,* which brought gospel music together with modern dance. Historian Arnold Rampersad provides insight on Carroll's role in Black Nativity in relation to both the text and the interpretation:

> If Carroll had a clear sense of what was vital in theater—"a dramatic fusion of words, dance, and song so that each element reinforced and explicated the others into a totality of meaning"—she found in Hughes an ideal playwright. "He was totally respectful and cooperative with everything I wanted to do," she remembered. "What I got from Langston was the freedom to do anything I wanted. He wrote and rewrote as I asked. 'Vinnette, I don't care what you do with the material,' he told me, '—you directors do what you want to do, in any case. Do what you want—just as long as you leave my name on the play!' I took him at his word, and he was happy—and astonished, really—about the way the thing turned out.[71]

The passage suggests the importance of stated authorship for Hughes independent of how and when ideas are conceived. In her first major success with Micki Grant in 1970, Carroll did not get credit for writing the book, although she conceptualized the Tony nominated musical by choosing each song and arranging them based on contiguous themes into what would later be described as a "concept musical"[72] by theater scholars. Although the songs Grant wrote were independently already in existence, it was Carroll who gathered certain selections and organized

[71] Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume Two: 1941-1967*.

[72] Ibid., 346.

them to fit her concept - which was inspired, in part, by other works including the poems of Langston Hughes.

For Carroll, the term conceiver printed in playbills and publicity was restorative in the sense that it archived work she had long been doing anyway, but without clear acknowledgment, before she took on that title. In this way, Carroll helps us to shift the implications of the term "conceiver" away from notions that follow the Immaculate Conception paradigm where a single dominant masculine actor contributes in an absolute moment and then leaves the woman to finish the work of creation but without the credit of conception. Led by Carroll, we can understand conception as a process that both precedes and extends beyond the evidence of creativity in any given performance.

Womanist Insubordination

In harmony with Alice Walker's poetic reasoning for who qualifies as a *womanist,* I understand Vinnette Carroll to be someone who exemplified womanist insubordination. Multiple elements of Walker's two-part definition will permeate my entire discussion of Carroll and her work, but my emphasis here is the notion that a womanist is a woman of color who is "responsible" and "in charge," toward the understanding that this leadership quality, which is understood to be intrinsic to womanhood, challenges notions of femininity and subordination present in the Nativity Scene exemplified in Mary.

Vinnette Carroll's occupational identity as director during an era when women directors of any race were few, along with the "in charge" persona for which she was known, is consistent with the mode of being that Walker describes, in part, as womanist. One of Carroll's often repeated stories is that a friend once told her, upon learning of Carroll's decision to pursue directing as a career, that Carroll wouldn't be considered for one-third of the opportunities

because she was a woman and another one-third of opportunities because she was Black. Carroll's response: "Then I'll have to do a hell of a lot with that remaining third.[73]" This exchange between Carroll and her friend is an example of premeditated "courageous or willful behavior" enacted by womanists, and I add the term *insubordination* to draw attention to the fact that this behavior is in direct opposition to existing structures and institutions, including theater, that would re-inscribe the subordination of women through exclusion.

Numerous accounts from theatre writers, and those who worked more closely with her, include adjectives like "resourceful" and "ambitious" to describe Carroll as a no-nonsense person who was very clear about what she wanted and expected from the men and women around her.[74] One of Carroll's students from the Urban Arts Corps, the non-commercial theater company that she founded in New York and led for twenty years, suggested that, "intimidating"[75] was how she found Carroll. Carroll herself shared repeatedly in interviews that she was constantly challenging assumptions among theater professionals about her capacity as a Black woman, noting that she could hardly separate her experience in terms gender from her experience in terms of race. In an interview filmed by Woodie King she stated, "Being a woman, oh, I don't know. It's so inextricably bound with being Black in New York in the theater. So it's hard to, to separate them

[73] Griffin, "When Malindy Sings."; Mitchell, *Living with Lynching : African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*.

[74] Felder, "'A New Feeling and Energy' for 'Black Nativity'".

[75] Sheila Ellis, "Vinnette Justine Carroll 1922 – 2002," http://iforcolor.org/vinnette-carroll/.

really."[76] The fact that Carroll oftentimes articulated this womanist mode of being in terms of her directing work is important because one can deduce that it informs her approach to directing women performers in particular. Most importantly for this project, her recurring articulations concerning womanhood *with* race inform my analysis of how she interpreted Langston Hughes' *Black Nativity* and other works.

Another interesting aspect of Walker's definition of womanist is that the qualification rests upon the distinction between girlhood and womanhood, between woman*ish* and woman*ist*, but concurrently there is slippage surrounding said distinction. I find it interesting that Walker's definition allows for womanist actions that are both a performance mode *and* a constitutive state of being, both "acting grown" and "being grown," which allows for transitional steps, or iterations, between the state of being a subordinate who is *acting* like she is not, and an in-charge woman who is actually not, or no longer, subordinate. This slippage between acting and enacting, and the precursory relationship that the former often has to the latter, is something that I believe Carroll to have been keenly aware. Carroll was the youngest daughter in an immigrant family and became an Ivy League doctoral scholar, then professional actor, and then Tony nominated director, artistic director and teacher. She continued to work as an actor on and off throughout her career.[77] Carroll certainly must have traversed and slipped between various modes of "acting" and "being" along a spectrum of performativity and performance throughout her life and career.

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[76] Lynn Felder, "Energy Abounds in 'Black Nativity'," Winston-Salem Journal, http://www.journalnow.com/relishnow/the_arts/performing_arts/energy-abounds-in-black-nativity/.et al.

[77]Dolen Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation* (Duke University Press Books, 2013).; Dan J. Cartmell, "Stephen Sondheim and the Concept Musical" (University of California, Santa Barbara. 1983., 1983).

Her own process of actually "being" grown in terms of the expertise and preparation that preceded her "in charge" occupational identity and womanist mode of being was very likely what informed her desire to facilitate that process for her students and developing actors in her charge.

Under the strict guidance of her Jamaica-born parents, Carroll completed a BA in psychology in 1944, an MA in psychology in 1946, a one-year residency as a counselor, and all work except for her dissertation in a PhD program in Psychology at Columbia University. To her father's dismay, but consistent with the love for the arts that her mother encouraged, she left the doctoral program and moved out of her parents' home - an act of insubordination to paternal authority - to pursue acting. She worked as a psychologist at the Bureau of Child Guidance during the day and continued taking acting classes at night at the New School for Social Research.[78] According to biographer historian McClinton, one evening while performing Lady Macbeth during scene work under the direction of Elaine Eldrige, Erwin Piscator noticed Carroll and insisted that she audition for his Dramatic Workshop. Piscator then arranged for Carroll to receive a full scholarship, and she stopped doing counseling work to study theater full time in 1947. Carroll was the first and only African descended woman in the program at that time.[79] For two years Carroll studied directing with Piscator, voice and acting with Stella Adler and Lee

[78] Walker, "Womanist."; Lovalerie King, "African American Womanism: From Zora Neale Hurston to Alice Walker," *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel* (2004).

[79] There were two African descended men already in the Workshop: Harry Belafonte and Sidney Portier.

Strasburg, dancing and gymnastics with Maria Ley, playwriting with Theresa Helburn, and stage music and composition with Hans Eisler.[80]

Some of her roles in New School productions included Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon*, the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, the Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland*, Christian in *Andronicles and the Lion*, and Bella in *Deep are the Roots* (McClinton). Her acting career looked promising, and she continued with roles like Sophia *in Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*, which debuted in London and ran there for a full year. She had hoped to continue this trajectory but her next role was "housekeeper" in *Jolly's Progress* in 1959. She found that most casting decisions relegated her to the roles of and mammies and maids; Carroll understood such casting to be based on her race rather than her talent. She ultimately refused to take such roles.

Carroll refused to participate in the re-inscription of Black woman servitude through performance or the notion that Black women were only capable of performing service roles on stage and in American life. Even though the majority of Black women during this time, the late 1950 and early 1960s were indeed multigenerational service workers by occupation, Carroll herself did not share in this legacy of service and was not willing to collapse her talent and identity into roles that only required her to portray Black woman subjugation and deference. Carroll refused to accommodate the limited imaginations of those who only wanted Black women to perform service character roles in theater thereby continuing to project service identities as inextricable from Black women's bodies.

Exemplifying what I understand to be womanist insubordination, Carroll fought against institutional theater practices that excluded women and Black women in particular by creating

[80] D. Soyini Madison, *The Woman That I Am: The Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

her own performance spaces and developing alternative narratives. She turned her attention towards directing plays during a time when women directors from any identity group were few. With that decision, however, Carroll soon realized that she "could not sustain a decent living depending only on an acting career"[81] and at that point could have opted to return to her work as a counselor. Instead, turned her attention to directing and took a job at the High School for the performing arts in 1955 directing student productions and teaching drama classes. In addition, she mounted her own one-woman-show during a time when such a notion was hardly common among Black women, and she is believed to have been the first to do so.[82] In 1957 Carroll directed her first play with professional actors, *Dark of the Moon*, at the Harlem YMCA featuring Cicely Tyson and James Earl Jones.

Womanist Approach to Directing

Racially gendered labor divisions that limited Black women to domestic work and other forms of service labor in the U.S. through the 1960s (Duffy) were reflected in realism based theater productions which also helped to normalize such divisions. As a director of High School productions, a director at the Harlem YMCA, and ultimately artistic director of the theater company she founded, Carroll contested those divisions and their theatrical reinscriptions by adapting plays into new works and by conceiving original works that countered the exclusion or

[81] Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins, *Women in American Theatre* (Theatre Communications Group, 1987).

[82] "Vinnette Carroll Giving Show," *New York Times*, 1954/01/18/ 1954.; Carroll is credited as being the first Black woman to embark upon a one woman theatrical production, but this seems like a natural extension of the blues and jazz performances common among Black women in concert spaces.

subordination of Black bodies and Black women in particular. Carroll's womanist conceptions - demonstrating love for music, dance, the moon, the Spirit, love, food, roundness, struggle, Folk, and herself - were not set in living rooms, and her sets had no couches or kitchens that would otherwise signify domestic work for Black women. Instead, she chose works that were most often based in religion, myth, or legend and involving the Spirit or supernatural. By leaning more towards works that celebrated non-realist and non-rational modes, Carroll created space for Black bodies in theater and countered realism narratives that excluded Black bodies or relegated them to service only. Her approach to directing drew upon both nonrealist epic production styles while actors employing Method acting influenced by Stanislavski. Carroll's hybrid influences often resulted in nonrealist or epic themes, including the miraculous birth of Christ in *Black Nativity*, performed by actors employing music and movement in conjunction with, rather that subordinate to, the dialog.

After Carroll's initial 1957 production of *Dark is the Moon*, Alvin Ailey again produced the play in 1960 with choreography. In a 1987 interview she described that era of the late fifties and early sixties as one in which Black actors were "not really getting jobs"[83] and so she had access to amazing talent. Carroll's version of *Dark of the Moon* is an example her womanist aesthetic applied to a Europe centered text, and this play would become the "signature" piece in her directing repertoire throughout her career. The original script by Howard Richardson and William Berney is based on a centuries old Scottish folk song about a witch boy who falls in love

[83] Anne L. Fliotsos and Wendy Vierow, *American Women Stage Directors of the Twentieth Century* (University of Illinois Press, 2008).

with a human girl, and the music-filled drama is set in the Appalachian Mountains.[84] Carroll infused a Black aesthetic into her version and she described her approach in reference to a 1990 production she directed at Spellman College:[85]

The witch boy is really an African spirit, and he wants to come to the US to be 'human.' He seeks transformation from a high priest and priestess to facilitate the change; he is then transported to a small southern town to act out the drama . . . We will need a specialist in African movement, someone trained in Horton to choreograph an Ailey-like love ballet, and someone trained in Broadway styles . . . and oh yes, we also will need some who can deliver that good gut bucket gospel music needed for the sections after he gets to Georgia. The play is really a discourse about traditional and 'new world' spiritualities . . . and the scenes must melt together like butter.[86]

Compatible with her inclusion of otherwise subordinated bodies in her productions was Carroll's inclusion of otherwise subordinated forms of expression. Rather than employing music and movement as forms in service to or in support of the dialog, in Carroll's works - including the dramas - music and movement were equally employed and central to the narratives. Carroll created a space of equality for diverse forms including orature, improvisation, music and dance

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[84] The song was brought to the United States by immigrants most likely in the 1700s (Theodore Raph, *The American Song Treasury: 100 Favorites*, Dover Publications (October 1, 1986), pg. 20

[85] Sandra Garrett Shannon, "What Is a Black Play? Tales from My Theoretical Corner," *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 4 (2005). Carroll worked almost up until her death in 2002 and Paul Bryant Jackson reflected, "at Spelman College, we invited Vinnette Carroll, "double all the letters chile," to direct our opening mainstage production for Fall 1990. Early on I asked her what she wanted to direct. "Dark of the Moon," she replied

[86] Ibid.

that were not limited by scripted dialog. She also de-centered the text as the dominant source of narrative to allow for a collaborative authorship of extra-textual narratives.

Another key example of Carroll's reimagining was her play *But Never Jam Today* (1969), which was a clear precursor to *The Wiz* (1974) in terms of dance form and overall structure. with Carroll's concept was an adaptation of Lewis B. Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* that she developed as early as 1962 with Anita MacShane at the Actors Studio. Carroll further revised the work into an "Afro-American Adaptation"[87] with an off-off-Broadway version performed in 1969. The show featured choreography by Talley Beatty, music by experimental German composer Gershon Kingsley, and Sherman Hemsley, who would later play George in *The Jeffersons* television series, as The Mad Hatter along with Marie Thomas as Alice.[88] Further examples of Carroll's adaptations of non-realism works include her 1960 version of a "magical fable" called *Ondine,* her 1970 version of a play by Irwin Shaw called *Step Lively Boy* about soldiers who rise from the dead after being killed in war and later re-titled *The Boogie Woogie Rumble of a Dream Deferred* in an expanded version performed in 1973 and thereafter, and a Black fable called *Croesus and the Witch* adapted for stage in 1971.[89]

In contrast to the often-cited statement on the Black Arts Movement submitted by Larry Neal, Carroll did not insist on completely abandoning all Western works. Even though she fully embraced the Black aesthetic, her rhetoric was racially inclusive, and her casting was sometimes multi-ethnic to match the scope of her community theater work spanning Black and Latino

[87] Calvin A. McClinton, *The Work of Vinnette Carroll, an African American Theatre Artist* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2000)., 70

[88] Karen Lynn Smith, "Vinnette Carroll: Portrait of an Artist in Motion" (1975).

[89] D. Johnson Sharon, *Carroll, Vinnette* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

neighborhoods in Harlem. She considered herself an "Afro-Saxon"[90] like her grandmother with whom she lived in Jamaica for most of her childhood. Aside from an affinity for Victorian literature and culture, Carroll emphasized the importance of a Black aesthetic valued for its own merit without comparison to European based forms.

Theater as a Teaching and Learning Space

Beyond her acting career and beyond her notable success as a director, Carroll's teaching work - for which she often did not get paid in early years - was a form of service work and reproductive labor. In addition to enacting womanist insubordination and a refusal to serve, Carroll was also interested in changing the working conditions for Black actors and helping to change how Black identities, and white ones, were being constructed through mainstream theater. Carroll's strategy was to teach Back performers how to create new narratives. Carroll worked through the 1960s as a drama teacher and theater director at the High School for the Performing Arts in New York from 1958 - 1967, director and actor trainer with the Inner City Repertory in the Watts area of Los Angeles in from 1967 to 1968, and finally founded the Urban Arts Theater in New York which grew out of a program called the Urban Arts Corps that was initially funded for one summer in 1968.

Carroll conceded that the government funded programs were most likely an attempt by officials to "keep the darkies happy and from tearing up the place"[91] during a tumultuous time socially and politically. However, she seized the opportunity to teach theater skills and stagecraft to young practitioners so that they could effectively develop alternative narratives of Black

[90] Amiri Baraka et al., *Black Theater Interviews* (New York, NY: Insight Media, 1987).

[91] Christine Dolen, "Vinnette Carroll: 1922-2002," *American Theatre* 20, no. 3 (2003).

identity and ultimately new narratives for national identity through performance. As director of the Urban Arts Corps, Carroll and her students went into communities spaces including schools, public parks, churches and community centers mounting original works in collaboration with community members. Carroll taught Corps members, who then immediately taught community participants, acting technique and production skills without charging for classes and without charging admission fees for performances. After primary government funding ended, Carroll continued this work with private grants and founded the Urban Arts Theater offering actor training and mounting new productions for the next fifteen years.

While Carroll had refused to serve in an on-stage capacity that would reinscribe Black subordination and servitude, she voluntarily served Black practitioners and community members toward the production of new narratives and alternate identities. In this sense, her work was a form of reproductive labor akin to the labor that Black women had historically performed in churches and in communities as teachers, builders, surrogate mothers demonstrating a concept of family much larger than the domestic sphere and not limited to biological immediacy.[92] Carroll's chosen service role was also related to the way that Black women gospel vocalists, most of whom were never famous and known only in local assemblies, served their communities through song toward the regeneration, or reproduction, of human capacity through by conceiving and producing embodied possibility.

As an extension of churches, community spaces and neighborhoods where African descended people could use "African-derived ideas to craft distinctive oppositional knowledges

[92] Baraka et al., *Black Theater Interviews*.

designed to resist racial oppression,"[93] theater companies were also spaces where such crafting took place. This oppositional knowledge is fundamental to one's daily survival in racially hostile environments and therefore workers who generate and transmit this knowledge perform a type of social reproductive labor.[94]

Reproductive Labor

Reproductive labor in the United States, whether commodified or not, is generally constructed as "female" but what is less acknowledged although "equally characteristic"[95] is how reproductive labor is racially constructed.[96] Social reproduction labor performed by family members, as well as caregivers and teachers, involves work that is emotional, mental and manual taking place both in private homes and social spaces. Within the spectrum of reproductive labor, on one end there is care labor that is qualified by nurturative work with corresponding emotional labor that is qualified by face-to-face or voice-to-voice.[97] On the other end of the spectrum there is the "dirty" work, like cooking and cleaning that does *not* require face-to-face contact and has disproportionately been relegated to racialized women.[98] In addition to the "hidden" or invisible aspect of feminized labor more generally, the "dirty work" increasingly disappeared from view as did the laborers who cook, clean and do laundry. These practices were particularly oppressive

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[93] McClinton, *The Work of Vinnette Carroll, an African American Theatre Artist*, 18, 19.

[94]Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Baraka et al., *Black Theater Interviews*.

[97] Hochschild, 147

[98] Glenn "From Servitude to Service Work"

because care workers were exempt from federal and state regulations surrounding minimum wage and maximum hours for work through the 1970s.[99] Considering Judith Butler's linkage of "the face"[100] and the perception of vulnerability, one might interpret the lack of regulation in conjunction with the increased lack of visibility to mean that those faceless workers who performed such dirty work, Black women, were not considered as "worthy" of defending. The absence of regulation surrounding domestic work historically is a factor common to musical performance work and the tendency of popular artists to be 'the face' of the performance while Black singers and musicians have often worked in the background without visibility to ensure dispensability is another commonality.

Black women doing domestic work and underpaid reproductive labor, which was the occupation field for most Black women through the 1960s, consistently had the lowest possibilities for social mobility in the United States historically[101] because unlike immigrant counterparts, Black women did not have the option of 'marrying up' or assimilating to shed ethnic difference.[102] This history of precarity specific to African descended women in the United States, might require further qualification of Morini's idea of feminized labor. She interprets increasingly capitalist conditions to suggest that, "precarity is woman"[103] now. She put forth that

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[99] Glenn *Unequal Freedom*

[100] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso, 2006).

[101] Factors contributing to this lack of mobility include the fact that, unlike white counterparts, "marrying up" was not generally a way change social or economy status.

[102] Duffy, "Doing the Dirty Work Gender, Race, and Reproductive Labor in Historical Perspective."

[103] Dan Dietz, *Off Broadway Musicals, 1910-2007: Casts, Credits, Songs, Critical Reception and Performance Data of More Than 1,800 Shows* (McFarland, 2010).

labor has become "feminized" in that work conditions now demand more relational and emotional labor noting "the trend towards the progressive insertion of women into the service industries"[104] in particular. She implied that the current labor environment takes advantage of women's pliability and hyper flexibility, or what she calls "baggage of female experience," which comes from centuries of woman subjugation. New demands for emotional labor, including deference, are perceived as inextricable from the female body, and the increase of women in the workforce correlates to an increase in the expectation for work of this quality. In this way, Morini's usage of the term "feminized" simultaneously critiques the quality of work expected within capitalism even for non female subjects while acknowledging the history of women's subordination and precarity.

In like manner, in order to critique current *hierarchies* of precarity even among feminized subjects while acknowledging the history of labor conditions that have been simultaneously racialized and feminized, particularly for Black women, the term *womanized* might be appropriate. By pointing out labor practices and social practices across gender and race that hide the "dirty work" as well as the workers - including assimilated men - who carry out such *womanized* labor, perhaps a new correlation can be developed to Black women and the history of their hidden work. Relevant to this project is a consideration of who performs the reproductive labor and the "dirty work" of American theater. This strategy of considering the "dirty work" first is inspired, in part, by the radical suggestion of Anna Julia Cooper in 1892 that the betterment of the nation depended on the betterment of its most precarious citizens who were

[104] Ibid.

Black women.[105] In other words, Cooper's logic suggests that if conditions improved for the nation's least protected citizens, conditions would improve overall. In light of Cooper's formulation as well as Vinnette Carroll's work situating theater as a learning space for actors and theatergoers alike, it follows that we should critically consider the labor of those who perform the "dirty" work within the socially reproductive space of American theater.

Within the industry of theater, and in the social spaces of theater schools and theater houses where practitioners produce feelings for a living, assimilated or non-ethnic male bodies often fill the roles of acting instructor, director, crew person and stage hand which are not immediately considered feminine occupations. For Vinnette Carroll, however, theater was primarily a teaching space - and such spaces are more often understood as feminine - toward the production, counter production and reproduction of narrative and identity formations in a process that included actor training, rehearsals, and audience engagement.[106] Beyond Carroll's efforts contextualized by her own racialized, ethnic, and gendered identity, mainstream theater can be more broadly conceived as a teaching space where emotional labor with hierarchical distinctions takes place.

Acting instructors and directors are teachers who often provide forms of care labor and emotional labor, which can be broadly defined as the work of inspiring certain feelings in others.[107] Instructors and directors however do not generally face the public and, in this sense,

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[105] James Thomas S. Hischak, *Enter the Playmakers: Directors and Choreographers on the New York Stage* (Scarecrow Press, 2006).; Dietz, *Off Broadway Musicals, 1910-2007*.

[106] In a future version of this chapter I will try to talk about Carroll's personal aesthetic, which in some instances, she herself described as masculine.

[107] Smith, "Vinnette Carroll."

perform hidden labor within the theater industry. Actors are clearly providing emotional labor with direct contact to the public, and this precarious profession is feminized in the way that Morini suggests, but not hidden or without acknowledgement. Crew members and stage hands also do the work necessary for the daily or recurring maintain of production, but do not provide care labor, do not face the public, and generally are not publicly acknowledged. Theater goers? unfamiliar with the backstage happenings might spend a lifetime attending shows without in inkling of the labor performed in the unlit spaces by workers wearing all black - or to what degree they even exist. In this way, crew persons and stagehands are the *womanized* workers of the theater industry. Unlike Black women doing domestic work, stagehands and crewmembers have been unionized with wage minimums and hour maximums, but the work is often inconsistent, precarious and unseen.

This tangential connection is enough to draw attention to both the similarities and differences of Black women's labor historically and revisit Butler's notion that unseen faces are less likely to be deemed worthy of defense. In previous discussions surrounding visibility in relation to equality for marginalized subjects, the emphasis has been on what marginalized subjects can directly gain from visibility. By thinking of crew persons and stage hands as womanized workers, the benefit to Black women might not be direct. The implications of the concept extend more broadly as a benefit to theatergoers who imagine the process of the production of feelings to be effortless or "natural" while the "dirty work" of training and stage production remains unseen. For theatergoers, a captive audience mostly comprised of wealthy individuals, or at least those with disposable incomes, the revealing of unseen labor surrounding the production of feeling and narrative might trigger an awareness of *womanized* labor in other industries or in private homes. In other words, making visible the labor required for production

in this area might be one way to change the practices that understate reproductive labor in related spaces.

One way to reveal this hidden labor is to invite crewmembers and stagehand to take a bow alongside actors at the end of a performance. This would mean *womanized* labor wearing all black (as crew members do) standing hand-in-hand with feminized labor wearing unnatural makeup and costumes. By changing our practices to reveal "dirty work" and the those who perform it, we as theater people - practitioners, patrons, and scholars alike - might become more aware that "dirty work" is an essential part of reproductive labor for theater and beyond. Perhaps such a revealing might eventually lead to the acknowledgment that Black women, like theater workers, have performed "feminized" social reproductive labor including both emotional labor and "dirty work" under precarious working conditions for centuries.

Anticipating what John Bush Jones describes as "fragmented"[108] musicals Carroll de-centered the text and challenged its "hegemony" by eschewing the forms of realism. Jones in *Our Musicals, Ourselves* suggests that the "fragmented" musical or the "concept" musical rose in popularity in the 1960s and 70s. Jones lists productions that include *Rent*, *Hair,* and *Godspell* to demonstrate the trend that he suggests is reflective of a fragmented America in the wake of key social events.[109] Missing from the top of Jones' list is a series of plays directed and/or conceived by director Vinnette Carroll that precede the major works mentioned. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the directing decisions of Vinnette Carroll in *Black Nativity* and beyond, are not only largely responsible for the continued trend of Black theater productions often described as

[108] Ibid.

[109] Nakano Glenn, "Racial Ethnic Women's Labor," 103.

"gospel plays,"[110] but they also helped to create a space for musicals fragmented musicals or "concept" musicals as a sub genre.

Several decades later in one of few critical works that theorizes about the role of theater directors, rather than actors or playwrights, Jon Whitmore in his book *Directing Postmodern Theater* wrote about directors in the 1990s who employed this approach that de-centered the text or resisted the hegemony of the text. Whitmore references interviews with directors Peter Sellars and Robert Woodruff to celebrate their stated approach to theater wherein the text does not have "dominance" in relation to actors, lighting, sound and music.[111] Although Carroll created and conceived works that were non-discursive, non-closure oriented and non realistic she was not listed as an early contributor to postmodern theater and fragmented musicals.

These oversights reverberate a question posed by Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins: "Why are African American women and our ideas not known and not believed in?"[112] as well as her position that "Developing Black feminist thought as critical social theory involves including the ideas of Black women not previously considered intellectuals."[113] Carroll's ideas were certainly deemed worthy of emulation, and therefore worthy of being revealed as contributive to the process of theater conception and corresponding social reproduction.

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[110] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminst Thought* (Knowledge, Consciousness, and Politics of Empowerment. Nova Iorque, NY: Routledge, 1991), 10.

[111] Jon Whitmore, *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance* (University of Michigan Press, 1994), 3.

[112] Nakano Glenn, "Racial Ethnic Women's Labor."

[113] Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work," 6.

Chapter Four

Between Duty and Romance: The Attraction of Sounding "Black" in Paris

On Bastille Day in France, participants hear and sing "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In" at social events across the city and at official state sponsored celebrations. Some argue that "Saints" is preferred to the official French national anthem.[1] Parisians also might sing the chorus repeatedly with a loud ruckus through city streets after a victory by the local soccer (European football) team. It is also possible that, if triumphant in contest, fans of an opposing British team will erupt into the same song since several UK teams incorporate "Saints" into game day rituals. During peak tourist season in Paris, a paying listener can witness a live performance of black-bodied singers in a jubilant rendering of the song "When The Saints Go Marching In" up to twelve times per week at one of the many *Americaine Noir* concerts that mostly take place at Catholic cathedrals in the city.[2] A visitor who attends one of the concerts by an interracial performance group might also witness a rendition of "Saints" with a solo by a white-bodied woman offering a vocal impersonation of Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong as a comedic gesture.[3] France repeatedly ranks number one in the world as a travel destination and in recent years Paris

[1] Ralph Slovenko, "When the Saints Go Marching In," *J. Psychiatry & L.* 28 (2000).

[2] The term Black in this study generally applies to African descended Americans but not French or Francophone people of African descent. Use of the term "black-bodied" rather than "Black" here is to denote French performers with dark skin. This choice is because the term "Black" does not carry the same meaning as the word "Noir" presently or historically in the French language, and not all black-bodied French people of African descent identify as "Black." Later in this chapter, I will discuss the distinctions of various identity terms across and between French and American histories and language usages.

[3] I use the term white-bodied to amplify the gap between skin color and cultural or national lidentity in France especially. I am not assuming that "white" is a valid identity position in a context where, according to national French culture, race does not exist.

has welcomed over twenty-two million visitors to the City of Light per year.[4] Of those travelers together with local spectators, approximately thirty-thousand visitors are drawn to attractions that are advertised or marked as "*Americaine Noir*" or "Negro American" through text or images. The repeated and demanded performance of "Saints," alongside the occasional pastiche/penache heralding of Louis Armstrong, is not only a sonic gesture toward the material and imagined history of Black American soldiers and jazz musicians in Paris since World War I, but also sacred musics historically inextricable from labor injustice. The concerts rely on the overlapping and romanticized histories of the music of African descended Americans in Europe, and in Paris particularly, including African descended American soldiers.

The way that "Saints" functions throughout Paris, and even Europe more broadly, is indicative of how gospel and jazz music and histories have been absorbed into an "imperial fantasy" where hegemonic practices of hearing "Black people on the move" have played a role in developing a "French imperial imagination."[5] In other words, independent of how the music has functioned for practitioners and their communities, the music within imperialist circuits across the US and France has often functioned to evidence Otherness, and ultimately inferiority, toward "musicological violence" through colonial practices of discovery and subjugation.[6]

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[4] "Profile of U.S. Resident Travelers Visiting Overseas Destinations: 2014 Outbound," (2015), 6.; "Unwto Tourism Highlights, 2015 Edition," (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2015). According to the World Tourism Organization UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2015 Edition, France is the #1 Tourist destination in the world with 83.7 million visitors; Paris official tourism website reports that most France visitors go to the capital.

[5] Edwin Hill Location 64, 104, 260

[6] Robin D. G. Kelley, Africa Speaks, America Answers Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times, (Harvard University Press, 2012). 4.; Aime Cesaire characterized racism in the United States as an extension of colonialism in a speech before the Congress of Black writers and Artists

Notwithstanding, certain contemporary Black-led tourist attractions in Paris contribute to an ongoing discourse about Black performance in ways that might counter imperialist notions of "tumult noir" and corresponding fantasies. Two types of black-led attractions, namely tours of Black Paris and a series of *Americaine Noir* concerts, offer visitors and locals alternatives to museums designed for "mastering otherness."[7] These performance events interpret music history and service in ways that concurrently create and satisfy nostalgia for tourists, but also amplify possibilities for anti-imperialist vocality, with potential for Pan-African or transnational Black solidarity.

Tour of Black Paris: Audible Monuments

The histories of influential Black American foreigners, whether lauded musicians or the 200,000 troops brought into France during WWI, are hardly visible within the most frequented tourist destinations or state sponsored museums dedicated to national history.[8] There are neither environments of memory nor sites of memory, as theorized by Pierre Nora, for visitors or local residents interested in the historic presence of African descended Americans in Paris.[9] In the absence of commemorative buildings, statues, and collections of artifacts that would be

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in Paris" - some Black Americans didn't see it that way - insisting that the U.S. Has an anti colonial history.

[7] Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (University of California Press, 1976).

[8] Barbeau, Arthur E., and Florette Henri. *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I*. Temple University Press, 1974.; Roberts, Frank E. *The American foreign legion: black soldiers of the 93d in world war I*. Naval Institute Press, 2004.; Harris, Stephen L. *Harlem's Hell Fighters: The African-American 369th Infantry in World War I.* Washington, DC: Brassey's, Inc., 2003.

[9] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," *Representations* (1989).

presented as tourist attractions, performance events meet the demand of curious travelers. In the absence of inanimate objects and structures dedicated to black bodied American soldiers and musicians who helped to shape Paris culture and history since WWI, the tourist oriented live performances noted here feature black bodies rendering *audible monuments.* I define audible monuments as sound objects constructed through live orality, song, collective participation, and sound-producing movement to mark history and memory for the purpose of tourist consumption.

Contemporary performers generate audible monuments during tourist attractions promoted as "Black" or Noir that help to romanticize American-French histories in ways that diminish or mute memories of anti-Black violence, yet the events ultimately rely on African identities or the presence of people identified with African countries to rupture a franchophone version of what Adria Imada terms "imagined intimacy"[10] that, in this iteration, occurs between black bodied American performers and France. Not unlike the concerts, the tours of Black Paris rely on performance, orality in particular, to convey the historic interaction between France and the Black soldiers who served in either or both American and French militaries and also served up entertainment. The events oscillate between contestations of U.S imperialism alongside anti-Black state action, and rehearsals of notions that perfect racial harmony has already been achieved. Black American soldiers and musicians might be either presented as a symbol of racial progress in spite of a social and political climate indicating the contrary, or constitute a process for critiquing and dismantling US hegemony and residuals of French colonialism. The tour celebrates the wide acceptance that many well-known African Americans found in France when it eluded them in the United States, but neglects the colonial and post-colonial histories of

[10] Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the Us Empire* (Duke University Press, 2012), 9, 22.

inequality for Francophone Africans during the same time periods. The concerts reference historic African American struggles and overcomings but often without a musical equivalent to reference current conditions of struggle for black-bodied people in France or the United States.

There are at least three tours that offer a guided experience of Paris with an emphasis on Black or *noir* experiences, history, and culture in the city. One is led by an African Descended American woman who was born in Paris to United States military parents. She founded the oldest and longest running tour over thirty years ago when she returned to Paris as an adult. The founder's personal military history and origins positioned her as an insider in terms of US military as well as Paris geography and culture. Her very existence is an intersection of Black American identity and U.S military presence on French soil which contributes to the credibility of her tour. The founder, who has mediated transnational geography and culture through her black body since birth, is ostensibly qualified to be the primary builder of an *audible monument* that has attracted multiple generations of mostly Black American tourists who seek to experience and understand such mediations. Awareness of her tour spread through word of mouth for over two decades and, more recently, she launched a website and also listed the tour on mobile travel applications.

During early Spring 2015 while the founder of the tour was back in the US visiting family, another African descended woman who had dual American and French citizenship guided the tour. With an equal amount of "Black Paris" credibility based on her own personal history, she described herself as a "military brat" who had lived in both the United States and France. She wore a multi-colored head wrap that completely covered her hair and tightly framed her cream-colored face. For the standard fee of 175 Euros per person for a full-day walking and public transit tour across Paris, she guided five African descended women travelers from the United

States including a mother-daughter pair and four others who were each traveling alone. Four of the five women were from the area surrounding Oakland, CA area and one, the youngest, was a student from the Midwest about to enter law school.[11] Unlike other walking tours where the spoken content is most often directly connected to a specific landmark site or physical structure of emphasis, the content of this tour of Black Paris was often only loosely related to the few buildings and monuments along the route.

To establish a foundation for a tour in this form the guide first established credibility for herself as a reliable source and also for the tour as a reliable attraction by presenting her personal history and the production history of the tour spanning several decades. The guide's monotonous vocal delivery style helped to induce high regard for the subjects of the tour, and, with a mostly uninflected matter-of-fact resonance, she produced the affect of a speaker with institutional, perhaps academic, authority. In one sense, in a manner related to the way that a monochromatic wall behind art or artifacts in a museum stages the work to be admired, her voice functioned in open air public space the way high museum walls operate in physical space - a bland contrast to the attraction. The content of her orality was compelling without dramatic, emphatic, or gesticulative delivery. Her speech was far removed from the "quasi-musical"[12] speaking mode often associated with African American oral traditions for affective public address. However, the constant movement of the sound source (her body) across the city on public buses and trains underscores the near impossibility of human-produced sound structures being fixed to a single

[11] The all-woman composition of the group along with two women tour guides embodies the contrast between the all-male Black military bands and the women who are mostly absent from the soldier-military narrative. I will discuss this dynamic more in a later draft.

[12] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 60, 188.

site or permanent coordinates on a tourist map. This trans-neighborhood mobility might disrupt any parallel to the *real property* and physical structure of a museum and its walls. Still, monuments can be transported from one location to another physically and imaginatively just as French colonial powers transported the Luxor Obelisk from Waset, Egypt to Paris in 1833, and just as city planners and architects reimagined the ancient obelisk design as the Washington Monument with construction beginning in 1848. The tour draws upon this example of transnational mobility to perform structure in a way that is not often associated with physical monuments. The guide suggests and demonstrates a process of monument making that requires only the body and voice as 'materials' for a grand structure of memory.

Even in the absence of original context or any aesthetic consistency with surrounding structures, monuments can independently draw the attention and admiration of witnesses. The few physical buildings referenced during the tour of Black Paris had been repurposed beyond original context (the apartment where Josephine Baker lived had become a cosmetics store) and in most cases, the content of the tour referenced performances (musical and military) lacking any material or real property referent whatsoever. Without a reliance on physical buildings, the audible monuments could be erected at any location throughout the city as self-sufficient attractions. In this sense, the guide's oral delivery style was more like the medium through which art, articles, and artifacts are created than the walls built to confine and present them. Through orality, the tour guide built and transported audible monuments heralding Black American soldiers and performers across the city of Paris.

The spatial and motion design of the tour of Black Paris eluded hierarchical frameworks that might objectify subjects or encourage tourists to experience dominance over contained artifacts or bracketed representations. The tour had very few visual points of emphasis and even

fewer moments of alienation between heralded key figures and the subjects who regarded them. Alternatively, the guide helped to affect a sense of continuity between key figures in the narrative and her listeners. Rather than perceiving subjects as exoticized Others or temporally distant primitives, the guide emphasized common experiences between the black bodied listeners and the black bodied figures she presented. Her periodic usage of pronouns like "they" when referring to the nondescript yet ominous presence of governments and dominant social structures on either side of the Atlantic, in contrast to her usage of "us" and "we" in reference to people with black bodies across nationalities and time periods, rhetorically denoted an emotional investment not sounded in her tone of voice. In addition, the tour of Black Paris was presented through oral performance from a body that was frequently in motion as one might expect from a walking tour, but in addition this transitory performance event also included a somewhat improvisational component. The guide sometimes gave participants options for what could happen next in terms of bus routes and the order of content presented. The tour began with a breakfast meeting in a cafe near the *Arc de Triomphe* where participants introduced themselves and discovered mutual acquaintances back in the States. The group then walked over to an open area near the Arc and sat close together on a single bench to hear the first narration.

Romantic Stories

Adria Imada in her theory of imagined intimacy addresses the "fantasy of reciprocal attachment"[13] surrounding a relationship formed through military action. This study draws from

[13] Imada, *Aloha America*, 154.

Imada's work surrounding the "service"[14] of aloha packaged for tourism in Hawaii with Hula performance as a primary animation of the aloha love metaphor. She explains how live performances in addition to the circulation of photos, films, and songs depicting hula dancers in close proximity to US service men produced imagined intimacy not only between soldiers and Native Hawaiian women but between Hawaii and the United States empire. Imada explains that the fantasy generated for tourists suggests a mutually consensual interaction between "companions" in a way that, "eroded the distinction between conquest and consent as it insisted on affective bonds"[15] in contrast to the lived experiences of forceful hierarchies. She also explains that the hospitality Native Hawaiians rendered, including hula performances under the banner of "Aloha," were proffered "with no expectation of return." In a similar way, the oral depictions shared by the tour guide helped witnesses of her performance imagine the non-sexual intimacy between Black soldiers and the people of France.

The narration for the tour of Black Paris ensued with romantic histories and gendered post-memories of Negro American soldiers who served their duties in combat and in concert with hopes that their masculine efforts would be rewarded with full citizenship rights and full human rights upon their return to the United States. Voting inequality of military service restrictions were symptomatic of the race (and gender) restrictions to full US citizenship at that time. One strategy of Negro soldiers toward gaining such rights was to prove their humanity by proving manhood. Active combat was widely understood as the ultimate act of masculinity and citizenship. The narrative structure of the tour presented *La France* as the feminine subject - a

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 11

damsel in distress, with American Negro soldiers in the role of the masculine and spirited hero fighting the dragons of US white supremacy on one side and the imposition of German interests on another. In one sense, France in the feminine role is good casting because this aligns with the national trend of its citizens to refer to their own country with a female pronoun, and there has also been a longstanding commitment to relinquished individual identities in favor of a singular national identity.

Additionally, by 1917 when the US joined the Allies to fight, most French men were in active duty leaving behind a disproportionate amount of women civilians in towns including Paris. Any time that soldiers spent in towns with civilians between battles was very likely to be in an environment where they saw more women than men, a situation that might have led some to imagine feminine characteristics to the group for which they were fighting and protecting. Such a gendered view of those needing to be saved works in conjunction with the effort to gender Black men as masculine, rather than animalistic or childlike, in an effort to prove their humanity toward full citizenship. US military policies, both official and social, barred the inclusion of African descend soldiers in combat during WWI, which meant barring them from the ultimate duty of (exclusive male) full citizenship according to recurring rhetoric, on the grounds that they were not intelligent enough or trustworthy enough to participate.[16] The underlying narrative of the tour was that when Negro soldiers fought under French command, they demonstrated to the world through the masculine act of combat in conjunction with the spirited yet refined act of musicianship that they were indeed men - not animals or ingrates as the US military has falsely determined. The sentiment of the tour was that having proved their

[16] Kenneth L. Karst, "Pursuit of Manhood and the Desegregation of the Armed Forces, The," *UCLA L. Rev.* 38 (1990).

abilities as men through the ultimate test of active combat, the soldiers should have been granted immediate extension of full citizenship and human rights by the US government. That strategy to employ gendered rhetoric, a failed one, has contemporary residual implications for how the soldiers are remembered and honored through the audible monuments of the tour.

This narrative of Black Americans in Paris puts forth how World War I brought wartime victory and jazz music to France and how the nation warmly embraced the black bodies who simultaneously rendered both. Key figures were jazz band leader James Reese Europe along with fighter pilot and jazz drummer Eugene Bullard. Toward an audible monument in honor of Europe, the guide explained that he was a Harlem resident and well-known jazz musician, led an all-Black military band comprised of professional jazz musicians. In her "post-memory"[17] performance, a type that draws creatively from fragments of secondary memory and tertiary sources in the absence of first hand memory, the guide solemnly recounted that when the first exclusively Black group of soldier-musicians arrived, France had been occupied by Germany and forbidden to sing or play the French national anthem for many years. Her monotone voice then quieted with secular reverence to convey that when the United States ship carrying the Harlem soldiers approached, the music they were playing on the deck of the ship caused French listeners to weep. She assured her audience that French civilians shed tears as the vessel drew near because they recognized the sound of the French national anthem. According to the guide, the familiar sound that they hadn't heard publicly in almost a decade, had been gift-wrapped with a jazz swing to flavor the anthem. The guide underscored the chronological fact that it was only after Black soldiers participated in active combat, that France and Allies started to win the war.

[17] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008).

Europe and his soldier musicians were, like the music they played, heroic and sensual in ways that ultimately brought deliverance and celebration. This affinity would eventually lead to an appreciation for Black American music more broadly in France that spread throughout Europe.[18]

The tour narrative cast the US in the role of the antagonist dragon-monster who was prone to act without logic or reason beyond the motivation to devour and increase in size. One account the guide shared with participants was the way in which France had to plead with the US during WWI to allow Black soldiers to engage in actual combat instead of only playing music or cooking and cleaning for the other US soldiers. In addition to that fact, labor historians assert that Negro soldiers also built port infrastructure, built railroads between ports, and unloaded all ships while being barred from active duty in combat. Another example the guide shared surrounds the mothers of all American soldiers who had been killed in battle while fighting for France. The women were brought to Paris for a special occasion honoring their sons. With the slightest sign of disgust, the guide explained without amplification that US officials forced the handful of Black mothers that the French government invited to travel in the servant quarters during the sea voyage, and they were uninvited to the festivities by US officials once they arrived in Paris. In order to punctuate the inequalities that they endured from the US military both abroad and on American soil, the storyteller guide repeatedly asserted that there were high levels of acceptance within Paris and France more broadly toward Black soldiers.

Along with the audible monuments to Black soldiers and musicians, the tour guide also constructed audible monuments to the city of Paris and to the nation of France. Narratives from the tour of Black Paris suggested that, in contrast to continued hostilities toward people of

[18] Penny V. O. N. Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

African descent in the US during and after WWI, a deep affection developed between Black soldier musicians and *La France*. This love story aligns with official reports as well as rumors and folklore about musician-soldiers that circulated during and after that era. In one example a war correspondent who wrote for the *Chicago Defender*, recounts unattributed statements asserting that, "officers and men in authority in the French billeting places had difficulty in keeping the villagers from following the band away when it played plantation airs and syncopations as only Negroes can play them."[19] These views indicating affective attachments by civilians throughout France were in concert with accounts that some Black soldiers found French women to be very "affectionate people."[20] A primary component of the ephemeral monuments to Paris and France erected during the tour was the understanding that many Black soldiers and musicians chose not to return to the US. Biographies and histories have consistently affirmed that, "better employment opportunities, freedom from the discrimination faced in the States, and a high demand for black musicians"[21] are the conditions that kept many soldiers in Paris. Although the vast majority of those 200,000 soldiers returned to the US, the departure narrative is consistent with the suggestion that Black Americans fell in love with Paris during and after WWI. The assertion of such love was expressed in a letter that French General Vincendon wrote

[19] William Allison Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War: His Splendid Record in the Battle Zones of Europe, Including a Resume of His Past Services to His Country in the Wars of the Revolution, of 1812, the War of the Rebellion, the Indian Wars on the Frontier, the Spanish-American War, and the Late Imbroglio with Mexico* (Cuneo-Henneberry Company, 1919).

[20] Lloyd, Craig. *Eugene Bullard, Black Expatriate in Jazz-Age Paris*. University of Georgia Press, 2006. 63

[21] Penny M. Von Eschen. Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War (Kindle Locations 94-100). Kindle Edition.

to soldiers that he commanded in the exclusively Black 370th infantry who, like all Negro units[22], were not permitted to engage in combat as US soldiers but fought in the French army:

> "You are leaving us. […] In the name of your comrades of the 59th Division I say to you, au revoir. In the name of France, I thank you. […] the American government generously put your regiment at the disposition of the French High Command. […] We at first, at Mareuil Sur Ourcq, in September, admired your fine appearance under arms, the precision of your review and the suppleness of your evolutions that presented to the eye the appearance of silk unrolling in wavy folds. […] in offering to me your regimental colors as proof of your love for France and as an expression of your loyalty to the 59th Division and our Army, you have given us of your best and you have given it out of the fullness of your hearts. The blood of your comrades who fell on the soil of France mixed with the blood of our soldiers, renders indissoluble the bonds of affection that unite us. We have, besides, the pride of having worked together at a magnificent task, and the pride of bearing on our foreheads the ray of a common grandeur. VINCENDON"[23]

This acknowledgement of Negro soldiers effectively "working together" is a gesture toward the competence of Black soldiers in a way that might have validated their manhood and ultimately humanity during that era.

Affection Critique

A more critical consideration of how affection is presented on the tour of Black Paris recognizes the absence of complete reciprocity between the Negro soldiers and those who represent France in a way that corresponds with the huge disparity in power between the colonial force and the disenfranchised Negro servicemen. On the surface, one might initially recognize common threads between the narrative of Negro soldiers who sail away from *La France* leaving a sad and perhaps indebted feminine subject and the *Doudou* song in which a French soldier sails

[22] Phillip McGuire, "Desegregation of the Armed Forces: Black Leadership, Protest and World War Ii," *The Journal of Negro History* 68, no. 2 (1983).

[23] Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War*.

away from Martinique leaving behind a sad woman with amorous attachments on the shores of the island. With a closer listen one can detect the more striking similarities between the Negro soldier and the Martinician lover who both engage in temporary and pragmatic relationships with those who represent colonial power.

In both the spoken narratives of Negro soldiers and also the songs rendered of the Doudou, those with military authority give affection for a season, but there is no permanent change in the status of the black bodied person rendering complete devotion. Complete reciprocity is implausible. In another sense, the story of Black men - who arrived in France during WWI strong enough to fight yet sensual enough to play arousing and upbeat music - is a direct contrast to the colonial doudou narrative. The doudou figure was repudiated by intellectuals of the negritude movement for her incessant sorrow over being left behind.[24] The doudou narrative was repeatedly presented in the sad song of loss depicting an African descended woman who cried on the shores of Martinique as she watched the ship of her beloved French captain sail away for good.[25] While the sound image of multi-dexterous troops of Black men who arrive by ship wielding both weapons and instruments is markedly different than the sound image of a woman weeping alone because she was left behind on the shores, the structures of power informing the affect are quite similar in both scenarios. In both cases the romantic attachments, that might fit Adria Imada's description of imagined intimacy, constitute the subjection of black bodies only valued when they serve at the leisure, or in the duty, of their respective governing authorities

[24] Edwin C. Hill, "Black Soundscapes White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic," (2013).

The lack of opportunity for reciprocity and the racialized expectation of service in conjunction with the imbalance of power between Negro soldiers and France as military power with a colonial history undermined the romantic retrospective narrative presented on the tour of Black Paris. The absence of bilateral participation in the romantic game of objectification, a game where participants take turns consuming each other as love objects visually or otherwise, marks the subjection of Negro soldiers even through acts of admiration following stellar military and musical performance. The historical disparity in affection was not amplified during the tour but is exemplified in the letter that General Vincendon wrote to Negro soldiers of the 370th division. The letter conveys his admiration for the "fine appearance" of Negro soldiers and describes their formations with words like "supple" and "silk" which invoke tactile sensations in a way that might have evidenced layers of homoeroticism in the all-male environment if only it were a gesture with the potential for reciprocity or collective engagement. In this instance, however, the General represents France as a single observer in a unilateral missive that is unlikely to be answered publicly and collectively by the soldiers who served, and any response would not likely include praise for how appealing the general looked in uniform. The General's 1919 report of unreciprocated gaze upon the soldiers who pleased him aesthetically is in some ways akin to that which would later be understood as an act of domination that helps to feminize the object of desire. As the letter continues, the General attributes only to the Black soldiers a "love" for France, "loyalty," and that they gave their "best" from the fullness of their hearts. Although the letter suggests that the soldiers and France are united through bonds of affection and the blood of fallen comrades, there is no clear indication in the letter that the love and loyalty attributed to Black soldiers was fully reciprocated by French soldiers of the nation more broadly.

While romantic attachments are often understood as affective bonds between potentially erotic love interests, it is important to note that romantic affinities also frequently parallel or mimic the earliest formed affective bonds between parent and child. Within the Black Paris Tour narratives, a slippage occurs between the relational structures that frame romantic attachments between war heroes and civilians, and those more akin to parent-child relationships involving hierarchy, care labor obligation, and physical subjugation by a dominant figure. By visiting a nation that has been known to foster or adopt Black American soldiers, artists, and intellectuals who were legally and socially declared unnatural and unwanted historically by their birth nation/father, Black-bodied tourists can imagine what life might have been like growing up with a different nation/father in a different home country. The tour provides a vehicle for those seeking an alternative father figure in the same cultural origin model that pairs mother Africa with an imperialist father nation having a history or military strength and systems for commodifying black bodies. The tour allows visitors to imagine a different form of paternalism involving a nation with a different colonial history.

The tour began with a love story between entertainer-turned-soldier James Reece Europe and concludes, most comprehensively, with another love story between France and entertainer-turned-soldier Josephine Baker. Both stories involve a high level of affect and affinity from France toward foreign, non-francophone, black bodies. Both examples demonstrate the paternal willingness of France to foster Black American entertainers who demonstrated loyalty to nation through military service alongside the labor of cultural production.

Josephine Baker and National Desire

The pinnacle of the tour took place at the Madeline Cathedral were the funeral service for Baker was held in 1975. Beyond the mentions of Baker's meteoric popularity and the astounding financial success surrounding her early performance career, the tour narrative highlighted Baker's military exploits and honors with great detail. After speaking about Baker's skill as a military spy, pilot, and wartime smuggler of people and information for the French resistance during WWII, the tour guide explained how she was honored with unprecedented esteem at death for her extraordinary military service. The romantic affair between *La France* (feminine) and *Le Baker (masculine),* culminated with a funeral attended by thousands while many more thousands flooded the area around the cathedral as far as the eye could see. Tour participants stood at the top of the Madeline Cathedral stairs with their backs to the cathedral facing the Luxor obelisk street and gazed down the avenue in order to imagine the entire space packed with the bodies of adoring fans wanting to bid her *adieu*.

As the only woman in France history to ever receive a State funeral - an honor usually reserved exclusively for presidents - the story of Bakers's widely mourned death provided another stark contrast for the African American women participants of the tour. In the United States historically, there have not been widespread outpours of sympathy or mourning surrounding the death or demise African descended women and the labor of Black women in American has long been unacknowledged and under compensated.[26] Even for celebrated African descended women artists and intellectuals like Phillis Wheatley, Henrietta Vinton Davis, and Zora Neal Hurston the unmarked event of death signified by an unmarked grave, which parallels

[26] Holloway, *Passed On*.

unacknowledged labor, has become a familiar American trope.[27] With the story of Baker's grand funeral following a lucrative career, the Paris tour narrative presented a symbol of racial progress in France and an alternative to the US practice of erasing Black women's contributions to the nation and not noticing Black women's deaths. In the process, the narrative credits France as a nation for rightfully demonstrating sorrow at the great loss of Baker, thereby proving its great love, with a grand funeral event and a burial site secured by Princess Grace of Monaco.

Monumental Exclusions

In order to maintain the romantic narrative thread throughout the tour, the audible monuments excluded facts and accounts of black-bodied soldiers who did not experience the affection shared among soldiers, musicians, and the nation of France. The groups less celebrated or not mentioned at all during the tour include Negro women who served the US military overseas, Negro soldiers who were not musicians, Negro soldiers never allowed to fight but who contributed manual labor, and Francophone soldiers, many black-bodied, brought in from regions that France colonized. The tour is mostly silent on any subjection of Black American soldier-musicians through performance at the hands of the French and instead resounds the injustice they endured from their own U.S. government. The silence surrounding subjects including people from French colonies who also contributed to the history amplifies a less than romantic relationship structure between France and black-bodied people rendering service to the French military.

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[27] Seraile, William. "Henrietta Vinton Davis and the Garvey Movement." *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 7 (1983): 7. And Akers, Charles W. "" Our Modern Egyptians": Phillis Wheatley and the Whig Campaign Against Slavery in Revolutionary Boston." *Journal of Negro History* (1975): 397-410. And Smith, Felipe. "Alice Walker's Redemptive Art." *African American Review* (1992): 437-451.

The tour accurately presents that soon after the arrival of the first ship of US soldiers that the French military urged the US to allow Black soldiers onboard who were otherwise assigned to cooking, cleaning, and entertainment duties, to move to active combat. The tour seemed to justify notions that for Black American men in Paris during and after WWI, the terms soldier and musician were often misunderstood to be synonymous. Contrary to this notion, of the 200,000 Negro soldiers in France, only 24,000 got the opportunity to work "together" with the French in active combat toward the demonstration of manhood.[28] Reese was one of the only high ranking officers who maintained command of his unit during the entire war (all others were transferred), and his unit was one of the few all-Negro units to engage in active combat when almost 80% of the Negro soldiers in France were restricted to labor assignments. They were exceptions to the US military policy of segregation, which was justified by the faulty notion that Black men were not intelligent enough or trustworthy enough to participate in combat.

While the tour of Black Paris celebrated sentiments like those expressed in the letter in order to construct monuments to Paris and France, there was no audible acknowledgement that sentiments like those in the letter gesturing toward the full manhood of black-bodied men was both rare and incongruent with the national posture toward Senegalese and West-African soldiers and civilians during the same era. There was no audible acknowledgment during the tour that anti-Black sentiments toward Senegalese and West-African soldiers prevailed widely through the French government. The French model of subjection is different that the US model historically because there were never laws within hexagonal France guaranteeing or officially naming this

[28] Karst, "Pursuit of Manhood and the Desegregation of the Armed Forces, The."

romantic subjection of Black bodies.[29] The French model is also different because the black bodies of US travelers have been historically categorized differently than those tracing origins directly to francophone African countries. For example, the amorous engagement that met Black American soldier-musicians was not bestowed upon Senegalese soldiers who became French citizens. Still, it is through contemporary "American" tourist attractions in Paris that the US and French models for subjecting swinging and fighting black bodies coalesce without the burden or boundaries of historical or cultural specificity.

Black Paris Tour Postlude

The narratives produced through the tour of Black Paris undulate between France's pleasure in embracing the Black American Other, and the duty of Black entertainers in Paris to perpetually earn or justify said embrace through military service in wartime and musical performance labor. However, over the course of the tour, the romantic embrace is rendered like a memorable and often repeated chorus, while the aspect of duty and subjection is less pronounced like the lyrics to the verse that nobody knows or remembers. After several hours of witnessing and participating in the construction of audible monuments celebrating numerous accounts of affection between France and Black Americans, the tour shifted from historic to contemporary, from soldier to civilian, from ephemeral to material, from American to Pan-African, and from audible to edible, in ways that moved beyond romantic fantasies toward structural critique.

Consistent with the tour's oral orientation, the concluding segment of the full day tour included a gastronomical experience at a Senegalese restaurant in the section of Paris known as Little Africa where the tour ended. The conversation at the tiny restaurant expanded beyond the

[29] Trica Danielle Keaton, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Tyler Stovall, *Black France / France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness* (Duke University Press, 2012).

African American women tour participants to include Francophone African men patrons on the topic of anti-Black violence in France and in the United States. Over delicious *mafe,* participants including the guide bounced examples of anti-Black sentiment, collective repercussions, and possible remedies that included forms of Pan-African solidarity across geographies. In Little Africa there were no "sights" in terms of monuments or statues. The location was attractive to the Black women tour participants because the space was bustling with black bodies, who identified with over thirty countries or territories and spoke three times as many languages and dialects. The sound of being Black in Paris - away from tourist markers in a place not listed as an attraction on the official Bureau of Paris tourism map - was a glorious cacophony of business transactions, friends greeting each other, children running to keep up, and workers who had gathered to protest labor conditions at a major intersection.

While the Black Paris Tour attracted and captivated participants with the narrative lure of love and acceptance for Black bodies in Paris, the tour ultimately facilitated the critique of US hegemony and anti-Black violence in both the U.S and in France through collective dialogue. Initially, the historical context of anti-Black French colonialism was absent from the tour completely, and only conveyed romanticized versions of Paris negrophilia through orality deemed credible. While the tour constructed audible monuments that preserved imaginings of Black love and acceptance in France, the tour concluded with real-time critique of present hegemonic conditions, and the participatory agreement that both US imperialism and French paternalism in a colonial context can be disrupted by Pan-African strategies. The tour ended by facilitating a conversation among Black Americans and francophone Africans. Participants critiqued anti-Black colonial structures and imperialism in a way that was reliant on African national identity associated with the material space of a Senegalese restaurant.

Reinterpreting Tourist Attraction

Between the war stories, participants on the tour moved through the city on trains and busses to visit neighborhoods where notable Black artists and intellectuals were once present. The tour included a visit to the park where Langston Hughes most likely frequented during his 1925 stay. On a sunny spring day in March tourists could imagine, with the help of the orator guide, where Hughes might have sat on a bench writing poetry. Also with her help tourists might imagine Hughes entering the adjacent metro station to take the train to where he worked as a waiter in a famous jazz club. The Black Paris tour is an example of tourist activity that relies less upon the visual, and more upon the audible, the experiential, and the practice of assisted imagining through performance.

In contrast to one longstanding definition of a tourist attraction, which requires a "sight" that evokes "respectful admiration"[30] and a marker that conveys information about the sight, the Black Paris Tour attracts overseas visitors without any specific promise of a Black American sight to behold. In this case, the dynamics of a tourist *attraction* extend beyond the attractiveness of any material objects. The tour was inconsistent with theories suggesting that tourist experience relies on the visual representations and to influence the tourist experience.[31] The tour had no set, no stage, no visual markings, and no visual representations upon which to rely in terms of a Black American history in the city. As the Black Paris Tour exemplifies, elements of attraction for travelers drawn to the tour can also include the appeal of different ideas, different

[30] MacCannell, *The Tourist*.

[31] MacCannell, Dean. *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. Univ of California Press, 1976.

ways that humans interact, and narratives that circulate in a particular geographic location. Furthermore, the dynamics of attraction precede the actual travel itself. One explanation of the attraction process is that potential tourists come in contact with images and objects that stir interest. For example, a person might desire a Paris vacation in order to *see* the Eiffle Tower after first consuming romantic images of the structure in print or in film for decades. In a manner oriented toward sound rather than sight, many African Americans who have *heard* stories about key Black figures[32] who spent time in Paris or relocated there permanently, develop a desire to be where those people were and possibly get a taste of the freedom described.

Since the 1980s when the tour began, mostly African American travelers have been drawn to the tour, which offers histories suggesting that Paris offers a different experience for Black bodies than what has been most commonly available in the United States. The romantic audible monuments to Paris generated during the tour alongside histories, autobiographies, and long-circulated folklore surrounding the love and acceptance of Black people can constitute a tertiary nostalgia and direct longing for tourists. However, the tour does not facilitate the overturning of the relationship structure that Black Americans have had with the United States as racialized subjects of "mixed" origins and partial citizenship, by simply replacing the United States with France in one's imagination. The tourist experience does not help to challenge paternalistic structures of imperialism in the context of a colonial history. Neither does the tour draw attention to the history of anti-Black racism that France has manifested toward migrants and soldiers from francophone countries of colonial interest to France historically. Missing from most of the narrative was the current and historical context of anti-Black legislation and

[32] Black periodicals consistently included accounts of key figures traveling to Paris or living there for over a century.

discourse from the French government toward francophone black-bodied subjects from countries the France colonized.

Afro-Americaine Concerts in Paris

The concerts presented as "Black American" function to mark the distance and difference between US American cultural history - including Blackness as a racial category - and French national identity, but simultaneously the concerts reverberate concepts of nation and race that are familiar in the sense of French imperial fantasy. Interpretations of performance and race in Paris cannot simply rely upon US-centric theory because "while there are two centuries of Black American presence" influencing culture in France and Paris particularly, "Questions of race are not U.S. imports but rooted in French history.[33]" For French audiences, the related terms *Americaine* and *Afro-Americaine* might both suggest alien or foreign identities. Not only does the implication of US American citizenship imply a different national identity in the sense of geography and government, but *Afro-Americaine* references a queer type of nationality where stratifications of citizenship based on race have been legally guaranteed by the constitution and all branches of government historically.[34] In this way, the very construct of race tethered to nationality is posited as American, and therefore distinct from French ideas of citizenship. French citizenship means incorporation into the Republic and a disavowal of different culture…. "French colonial mechanism were erected on an ethnocentric assimilationist paradigm that

[33] Keaton, Sharpley-Whiting, and Stovall, *Black France / France Noire*.

[34] In future versions I will unpack this concept further.

refused to interpret cultural elements.[35]" The French government's historic refusal to acknowledge race in relation to citizenship or society formally, although social stratifications based on race and religion certainly exist, is the context through which *Afro-Americaine* reads not only foreign, but strange and peculiar.[36] It is this very difference that constitutes tourist attractions defined as "elements dislodged from their original natural, historical and cultural contexts"[37] in a process that situates tourist attractions as modern inventions.

While the peculiarity of citizenship that is historically framed by race might read as foreign, France does share with US America a history of anti-Black colonial practices that help to constitute imperialism in their respective iterations. During *Afro-Americaine* concerts that are African-led, singers and musicians present both the jubilant and sad sonic signifiers of this imperial history, and it is within this sound space that French ticket buyers might encounter the familiar. Staging the familiar space of imperial imagination for *tumult noir*, performers create possibilities to critique imperialist histories and residual practices that, "dismiss, repudiate, and systematically erase African contributions"[38] to French history and the particularities of African francophone citizenship. Concerts might attract ticket holders with the promise of nostalgia for imperialism but in some cases performers enact the surrogation of foreign Black bodies with

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[35] Dominic Richard David Thomas, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (Indiana University Press, 2007).

[36] Race and Blackness are constructed differently in France and the meanings do not translate directly. In fact, race does not officially reside in France. P6 BFBN

[37] MacCannell, Dean. *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. Univ of California Press, 1976., 13

[38] Thomas, *Black France*.

their own toward a disidentification from both limited notions of French citizenship and tropes of Black America, in order to claim space for alternative transnational Black subjectivities.

There were over a dozen different groups advertising gospel music concerts in Paris throughout the course of 2015, and the most visibly advertised groups, Gospel Dream and (Gospel) Legend Singers, performed each week year-round at the more centrally located Cathedrals.[39] These two groups also seem to have standing engagements or perhaps exclusive residency agreements with several large cathedrals in the heart of the city where weekly concerts take place year round. Apparently, some locals refer to the groups based on the name of the cathedral rather than the group's name as in, "have you heard the gospel singers at the American Cathedral?[40]" Gospel Dream, made up of about twenty singers and musicians at any given concert, is the only group performing weekly at *Cathedrale Americaine*, and is by far the most visible with additional weekly performances at *Eglise Saint-Roch*, *Eglise De La Madeleine*, and *Eglise Saint Germain Des Pres,* which are all in close proximity to major tourist attractions including the Louvre, Eiffel tower, and Champs Elysee Theatre. The maximum attendance for Dream concerts reaches 400 during peak travel season with tickets ranging from twenty to forty Euros. Gospel Legend perhaps had less reach and maintained only one weekly engagement at *Eglise Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre,* but the location is just across the river from Notre Dame in the most central location of all Paris concerts. The maximum capacity at *Saint Julien le Pauvre* is about 200 persons and the ticket prices range from thirteen to twenty Euros. The groups Gospel

[39] Of the twelve or so that advertised events in 2015, this study engages six, with three engaged in depth.

[40] This question was asked of me (in English) by a local Paris woman when I shared with her (in French) about my research.

River and Paris Gospel Choir have also been affiliated with churches. River performances were located more south and east of central Paris at *Eglise Lutherienne Saint Marcel* and *Eglise Lutherienne De La Trinite* with about five total performances between venues each month, and about one-hundred guests and tickets in the twenty-five and thirty Euro range.

Paris Gospel Choir, the only group led solely by a white-bodied director, performed about once per month, and held weekly fee-based open rehearsals on Mondays for under twenty Euros. The director hosted fee-based weekend gospel training workshops for ninety Euros per person. Videos of 2015 workshops posted on the Paris Gospel Facebook page suggest attendance of about one hundred people at workshops, and the weekly rehearsal I visited had about seventy-five people in attendance. *Archange* gospel choir also has the structure of a fee based teaching-learning model, and classes are taught by a directing duo consisting of a white-bodied French person and a Black American expatriate who taught and performed gospel professionally from a young age. The students and alumni perform at the *Chat Noir* cafe while spectators eat and drink, and they also perform at at other venues frequently and occasional concerts throughout the year. The Black American director is a highly skilled vocalist who sang lead on many *Archange* numbers and is also the single director of the largest and most professional Paris-based gospel choir, *Gospel pour 100 Voix.* The one-hundred performers of 100 Voix include seventy-five singers, six dancers, and at least twenty musicians and technicians chosen through a process where 2,000 people from all over Europe auditioned. Tickets for performances, which take place in a different European city each weekend during the "World Tour," range from forty to sixty-five Euros for shows in arenas that hold up to six-thousand spectators.

The only choir founded and run by women is a much smaller audition based choir that is also linked directly to the US. One woman of Martinican descent and one who is French and

white-bodied together founded the Paris chapter of the Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA), which held seasonal concerts and has travelled to the United States to participate in annual GMWA events. Like most GMWA choirs, they rehearse about once per month with more rehearsals leading up to seasonal concerts. Less visible to tourists since leaders did not promote concerts on commercial ticket buying websites like all other groups listed, Paris GMWA drew from practicing members of Protestant communities across Paris suburbs for participation and attendance. Also drawing from Protestant communities of Paris suburbs - where many Black people live - for audience members and performers was the Total Praise choir. Total Praise holds only one event annually featuring a well-known US headliner for about six thousand people, and the choir is affiliated with a very active ministry that is led by the same husband and wife team who direct and manage the choir. There is quite a bit of overlap between the weekly ministry participants and those who sing in the concert choir annually so that weekly involvement for faith practitioners might double as rehearsal for the commercial event. At the services I attended, which each ran for several hours, the skill level of the singers and musicians who most likely comprised Total Praise matched that of *100 Voix* and far exceeded all others.

A Strange Attraction

The promotion and presentation of the concerts in print and online constitute the first layer of Othering for the American musical form while simultaneously stirring or recalling the imperial imagination. Of all groups listed, Dream and Legend have the longest performance histories, being founded in 1990 and 1995 respectively, and Dream in particular seems to have perfected a successful method for attracting transient and local paying audiences to the Afro-American sound in ways that some other groups might emulate. Gospel Dream posters are

visible in every area where there is heavy tourist traffic. Promoters post the posters on walls adjacent to ATM machines, on construction fences and barricades, on lamp posts and power poles, and near major metro entrances. Each week the Dream promotion team distributes fresh posters with the dates and locations for the next concerts taped at the bottom. Someone moving through the city might sight numerous posters in different locations across the city in a single day. The primary image of the Dream poster, and most others, is a robed group of singers who have been captured by camera in the motion and the moment of Black performance. The singers are slightly leaning in the direction of a sway, their mouths open to indicate the act of song, and their hands either parted with tension to indicate clapping, or lifted to indicate an act of faith. In the case of Dream, the background is a set of three multi colored stain glass windows between aged pillars inside a cathedral and all singers are black-bodied. Beneath this standard image type is a web address (gospeldream.fr) and finally the section announcing the next performance date with location in bold black ink against a sold white background. In addition, concert goers can get information through listings where tickets can be purchased online at billetreduc.com and FNAC.com. Both the posters and the online ticketing websites supply event descriptions that frame performances.

The use of the prefix "Afro" or the word "Negro" with an English usage, instead of the French word *noir* placed after the proper noun, is a way that each flyer names and puts forth both the foreignness of American nationality and the strangeness of nationality explicitly categorized by race. At the top of full color Gospel Dream(c) posters are bold white capital letters that spell "Gospel" across the top, the word "Dream" in smaller yellow letters beneath with only the "D" capitalized, and the words "*chants authentiques de l'eglise afro-americaine*" directly below constitute the header space. The Legend advertisements were on smaller sheets that appeared to

be simple photocopies with black ink on yellow-gold paper. The word "gospel" in all capital letters appeared toward the middle of the page with a subtitle that read " & Negro Spirituals." In a similar fashion, the sub header for the four-color Gospel River poster read "*Chants traditional Afro-Americaine*" in small all-capital letters. In some cases this subtle language might lead concert goers to believe that the performers who render "*chants authentiques"* are actually from US America. In other cases the language cues suggesting 'foreign and distant' might help patrons suspend disbelief while African migrant French citizens put on "Negro" or "Afro-American" sound costumes. The outdated English language on posters and flyers, rather than a French translation (Noir) or contemporary English phrasing (Black or African American), anticipates that concert goers might enjoy the sounds of black-bodied singers who do not present as French, but with layers of temporal and national difference. The avoidance of the word "Black" marks the way that the musical presentations are tethered to eras that precede the Black Arts Movement and a series of Black rebellions. Concurrently, this avoidance also indicates the way that performances are framed to fit within an imagined space where black-bodied people are repeatedly and perpetually sounding subjugation so that listeners can hear the Otherness that often constitutes imperial fantasy.

The avoidance the French word "noir" in most promotional material not only marks through language the implied distance from French nationality of the racialized performance style, but it is also symptomatic of the complexities surrounding the language of race and translation itself because *noir* has at least three different meanings or connotations. One early usage of *noir* is as a term to signify race in French abolitionist literature as early as 1788 and

English versions of that work often translate the word as "Negro."[41] Over time however, the term *noir* developed some connotation of "colonial stereotype"[42] usage of the word "Black" expanded in Paris to correlate with "the 1998 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery" In dialog with the term "Black" a saying emerged: "Be Black when you want to rap, be our when you want to get a job," and this implies that there is a link between the word "Black" and French interpretations expressive culture including social protest and rebellion, in contrast to the word "noir" which might conjure notions of French civic participation and assimilation practices. While unwilling to embrace the term "Black" in promotional material, the language is also resistant to the term *noir*, and both terms would require a temporal proximity to evolving race relations in both France and US America. The preference of the terms "Afro" and "Negro" suggest the process of "thingification" for tourists who might witness the bodies and sounds of Otherness implicated by language and temporality. Notwithstanding, performers often take opportunities to move through the unstable spaces of imagination to sounds and embody their own constructions of Blackness in ways that disidentify with assimilationist concepts of French identity.

An additional way that posters are compatible with and contributive to imperial fantasy, are the actual group names "Gospel Dream" and "Gospel Legends," which reference spaces of imagination and fantastical narrative to that reiterate illusory consciousness and a time far away. The words "Dream" and "Legend" function to detach the conspicuously "Negro" music from the 'here and now' of Paris despite the fact that black-bodied African migrants, who in many case

[41] Before this shift, *Negre* was used most frequently being interchangeable with the word slave and was often translated "nigger"

[42] Thomas, *Black France*.97

identity as noir, and increasingly "Black," are the primary performers each week year-round. The performers are mostly African migrants or the France-born offspring of African migrants who often identify with both their family country and France simultaneously. Still, the language of the posters might invite concert goers into a space of musical dream and legend where they can continue to ignore local social stratifications based on race while turning an enthusiastic ear to song narratives that recall anti-Black legal and social practices of US America, which are strangely attractive because they resonate with French imperial history.

Gospel as Recurring Dream

The Gospel Dream program, meaning song choice and placement, delivered with some variation throughout the year over twenty years often serves as a template or strategy that other Paris based groups might employ for their own recurring concerts. The program exemplifies the performance strategy long associated with Black sacred music presentations since the Jubilee era being composed of both slow and uptempo rythmic songs, or songs that begin slow and then increase in tempo in the ring-shout tradition. Several numbers might be described as 'bluesy' because of the abundance of blue notes, or 'jazzy' because of saxophone accompaniment. While those commercial genre distinctions might obscure the shared and overlapping lineage across blues, jazz, and gospel music, they help to establish the performances in relation to a continuum that is distinctly American. Also, the Dream concert performers consistently performed *Afro-Americaine* in the way that promotional posters alluded with a repertoire of songs composed during or before the 1970s, vocal styles developed through Black or soul music traditions based in the US, and a lexicon of choreography made popular by Marion Williams and her contemporaries in the 1940s. Notwithstanding, performers also disrupt an imagined past, and

imagined distance, through performances that enact a current and present address, and assert the simultaneity of French nationality and Pan-African subjectivities.

At an April 2015 Dream performance, the poster on the door of the cathedral is the same one distributed by the hundreds across the city each week. A line started forming on the steps of the cathedral more that thirty minutes before the performance start time. A tall and girthy man with skin the color of dark chocolate asked (in French) those waiting to move up in the space of the line and also asked (in English) if we already had tickets. He circled back to inspect the line two or three times. He did not smile. Inside, the make-shift ticket booth was a small table in the small room that was the foyer of the church. The space was smaller than a freight elevator with a tiny card table and a different girthy man, younger with glasses and also with skin the color of chocolate but on the verge of a smile, sat there to receive and sell tickets. Behind him was a wooden half-wall with plexiglass at the top. Occasionally he would get up from his chair and look through the glass to see how the seats were filling up. The congregation area was filled with wooden seats rather than pews and an usher directed us to seats according to the price level of our tickets. With a VIP ticket of thirty Euros the front ten rows of chairs were available and the two sections behind it were available to the those who purchased at the two lower price points respectively. There were at least 100 concert goers present who took up between one-third and-fourth of available seats. During peak tourist season shows often sell out, or come close, so that seating would be at or near capacity.

The concert began promptly at 8:30pm with a greeting conveyed in both French and English. The woman greeter was also the first soloist of the evening, and the opening song was the traditional folk spiritual “By and By.” She begins the song alone and sings the chorus once while the choir members snap their fingers to keep time singing, “By and by when the morning

comes, All the Saints of God will be carried home (or gathered home), And we shall tell the story of how we've overcome, And we'll understand it better by and by." One singer played a percussive instrument that guided the rhythm, increasing in tempo throughout the course of the song. The second time she sang the chorus, the choir joined her skillfully with a loud and strong four-part harmony. When she sang the verse, the choir hummed in harmony beneath her lead vocals with consistent percussive finger snapping. The choir began the song in its traditional swing tempo with clapping and rocking, and increased speed after the second verse. The lead singer stood at least five feet in front of the choir facing the center aisle of the cathedral. She used her arms to accent works and toward the end used a flapping motion akin to birds flying - movements that were common to televised Patti Labelle performances in the 1980s and beyond. The song ends after about four and a half minutes with a full voice extended "by and by" sang by lead vocalist and choir together. The song *"*By and By" is significant, in part, because it refers to "the saints of God" not as supernatural figures promoted to a status of reverence by the catholic church, but as common church goers who choose to sanctify their own bodies in order to join in the collective naming of saints in the Black Pentecostal context. The strong opening with a jubilant up tempo song sets the tone for the entire performance which included a series of such songs contrasted with a few slower spirituals, anthems, and ballads.

The second song, "Total Praise," is a slow tempo song composed in the 1990s by classically trained composer Richard Smallwood. The song has become a gospel music standard in the US. The song is often performed during official or solemn occasions held at Black churches across denominations including communion, consecration services, or funerals. Consistent with the original composition, Gospel Dream performed the song without a fast tempo, without hand-clapping, and without vocal solo embellishments (melisma). In this way,

the song breaks away from the performance styles and delivery techniques that most often mark gospel music and antecedent folk spirituals. Rather, the song is more akin to the tradition of modified Negro spirituals or "neospirituals" made popular by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Still, the song is varied from that tradition also in that the lyrics are taken directly from Psalms, without clear evidence of racial or cultural meaning specific to the experiences of African descended people in the US. More precisely, the song is absent of references to death and suffering that permeated most gospel music before the Black Arts era. The audience response to this song was unenthusiastic, but perhaps the quiet response was indicative of solemnity or self reflection consistent with the commonly intended affect of the song within churches. It was at this point following the song that the choir director, an ordained minister and pastor, addressed the audience for several minutes in French while an English-speaking choir performer translated. The minister spoke about the spiritual significance of the gathering and the intent of the group to spread love, joy, and the light of Jesus toward hope for the future. His address might have been lost on some congregants who yawned, looked away in seeming disinterest, or giggled at the translation process when the interpreter could not keep up or paused awkwardly when trying to find the best English words.

The next choir selection rescued the audience from yawns and untimely laughter with a spirited rendition of "This Little Light of Mine." The performer countered the temporal distance of the song lyrics and any historic associations with improvisations that demanded listeners to hear 'here' and witness the 'now' of Black performance that - in spite of what the posters seemed to promise - was not foreign or strange, but locally French, delivered by French black-bodied people, and therefore, familiar. One of the singers made his way to the front with a limp that suggested some degree of challenged mobility, and after the concert the same man would leave

the venue with the help of a cane. This chocolate-colored man who had a booming voice started with call and response: “Say Hallelujah! Come on give praise to the Lord! Hallelujah!” Then he proceeded with magnanimous melisma, guttural sounds, and ample blue notes in a drawn out delivery of “I’m gonna le -et it shi-i-i-ine.” He continued with more improvised phrases like, “Ahhh…Hey!” and “Hey, hey, Come on” then completed the line with a gritty yet pretty melismatic growl, “Agggggghhhhhhh.” Certain notes he produced sounded like the low pitched creaks of a hinge supporting a very large wooden door that might be found in an ancient castle or cathedral. Those notes resonated heavy and aged, yet piercing. At other times he sounded more like the rumbling and roaring engine of classic car designed to announce its power through vibrations accompanying forceful noise and movement. Still, certain of his notes were more reminiscent of a classical tenor singing in a bell canto style and he delivered clearly with perfect resonance meant to reverberate throughout the centuries old cathedral walls and ceiling beams.

This singer with many voices is a musician who plays through his body, the instrument, and also plays a vocal trickster game common to many forms of African descended oral expression. This singer, whose different ability for walking or stepping might limit the dancing of his feet, freely darts and leaps in and out of genre, style, and form using his voice. Not unlike Marion Williams several decades before, this man often smiled in moments of whimsical delivery to mark his own knowing and pleasure. I understand this pleasure to be a both physical pleasure that comes through the very act of delivering sound through the body as a type of social dance but in aural space, and also the pleasure of knowing that this voice cannot be contained or adequately captured by commercial replication or exact imitation. His delivery is consistent with gospel music’s overall ability to double back upon itself as both the influenced and influencer in relation to secular forms. The singer teases the audience with his vocal movement the way one

might tease a curious cat with dangling string toward the amusement of the dangler and the wonder of the cat. In this playful and pleasurable way, the unscripted sounds composed in the moment of improvised delivery captured the attention of the audience.

During the lead singer's performance of the two numbers audience members did not yawn or look away to signify disinterest and every ear was fixed upon the vocalist who smiled often during his performance as he played his vocal game. After four minutes, the tempo abruptly increases, and the singers shift into a rendition of "Glory Glory (Since I Lay My Burdens Down). Aftter about seven minutes of singing between the two songs, they increased the tempo yet again and sang with more rigor, volume, and more aggressive clapping than before while repeating the words "I feel better." As the song neared its end, the singers repeat or vamp on the phrase "Since I lay" nineteen times before closing with an extended "since I laaaaaaaaaaaaay" to slow the tempo down for the final phrase, "My burdens down," to end the song after eight minutes and thirty-one seconds. It was then the sound of thunderous clapping from the audience that filled the cathedral for nearly half a minute.

The next song, "Highway to Heaven," began slowly with a saxophone introduction and then a vocal solo by the lead singer. The man soloist elongated each phrase, "It's a hi——way—— to— hea——ven" along with punctive accents from the electric keyboard player who used the sound of a grand piano the for the concert. After about two minutes, the soloist and saxophone player increase to a mid tempo at 100 bpm to produce a swinging gospel sound. This midtempo gospel swing sound was most likely similar to the one witnessed by Langtson Hughes when he described his dismay with "swinging gospel" in the late 1940s. That swing style began in Pentecostal churches and eventually became common among Baptists and other denominations; it remains the most common tempo and rhythmic practiced in community church

environments where gospel music is standard. After about two minutes, the saxophone signaled the tempo increase to 150 bpm for a vamp of the phrase, “Walking up the king’s….” that was repeated twenty times.

Following “Highway” a woman starts the song “Day by Day”[43] at 92 bpm increased slightly to about 103 mid way through the song. The woman began singing alone in a ballad style that is akin to what one might expect to hear from a pop vocalist like Whitney Houston, but with less evidence of either rehearsal or natural ability. The solo vocalist was a larger than average women with skin the color of a creamy banana custard and thick wavy hair pulled into a single shoulder-length braid on one side. She sang without the choir, only piano, for more than two minutes, and the lyrics of the song seemed to convey the experience of daily precarity and the futility of planning for the future. The song addresses the despair and urgency present tense in this life, eternity in the after life, but no sense of long term in this life. The choir joined to sound a collective sense of current despair with hope for the afterlife to suggest that an end to despair in one’s own lifetime was beyond the scope of possibility. When the somewhat solemn song ended after five minutes the audience response was enthusiastic. After fifteen seconds of hearty applause, the saxophone cued the intro for the next uptempo song, “Michael Row Your Boat Ashore.”

The man who was leading “Boat Ashore” dramatically stopped the ginger call-and-response ritual when less than a minute had passed to enact a meta-ritual. In what was at one time a very common practice within both soul and gospel music performance, the song leader interrupted the ritual of participation to demand greater participation. This action within the

[43] This song is not the sang with the same title on the Godspell soundtrack from the Broadway musical. This song I’ve never heard before. OR at least I don’t remember.

church tradition is often accompanied by the spoken disavowal of an audience in favor of a congregation or collective participation. The lead singer appealed directly to the concert goers and asked the attendees to sing with the choir "hallelujah," which was the response to his call. The song has only a few lyrics and simple phrasing. For example, the leader sings, "Michael row the boat ashore" and the participants respond, "Hallelujah," then the leader sings, "Make it to the other side" and again the participants respond, "Hallelujah." After about four minutes, there is a saxophone solo and then the instrumentalist steps forward to compete in a playful 'dance off' between the lead vocalist and the saxophone player. By this point all of the music had stopped but the choir vocalists continue repeating "Hallelujah" with percussive hand claps to create a folk aesthetic reminiscent of outdoor social dance gatherings familiar across cultures and geographies. The hand clapping is encouraged by the improvisational calls and yells from soloist and some point the hand claps briefly shift into a polyrhythmic musicality that is common to some Pentecostal churches and also some West African musical traditions.[44] While this might sound like cacophony or even chaos to some ears, there are distinct and recognizable layers of rhythm and patterns common to improvisational vocabularies. For US Black American performers who inherited the practice independent of commercial circulation and without widespread presentations, they are most likely African music retentions.

In contrast, the lyrics and delivery of the next song are filled with references to Black American suffering and death; in this Dream context the song functioned as the fulfillment of the *Afro-Americaine* otherness promised by the posters. Following the "Hallelujah" ring-shout

[44] I plan to explore this in future projects. As far as I can tell, there is not name for this spontaneous and improvised clapping performance, but I grew up hearing and performing this type of clapping, and I recently saw/heard the same style on a video of West African "fiddle" performance on a viewed that Prof. Dje Dje showed at a conference.

ritual the choir sang “Soon Ah Will be Done” (with the troubles of de world) which was one made known to many by Mahalia Jackson who famously performed a solo version in the film *Imitation of Life* (1959). The song is traditionally a performance of Negro vernacular dialect - the official title is soon *“ah”* will be done rather than soon *“I”* will be done - and the Dream version of the song was squarely in this vein of the Negro Spiritual tradition. The acappella song was well-rehearsed, and this was evidenced by the synchronized endings, precise pitch, length of notes held, as well as exact phrasing and affective dynamics that are only the result of diligent practice. Still, not unlike many other songs in the program that were less demonstrative of diligent preparation including “Day by Day,” Highway to Heaven,” and “Glory Glory (Since I Lay My Burdens Down),” the song “Soon” conveyed not only the eminence of death but its temporal proximity for black-bodied people in US America historically. No parts of the song were translated into French, so the English language together with the Negro dialect in which singers performed “Soon” helped to create the space where French attendees could imagine total Otherness for US imperialism (including domestic iterations) and imagine a distance between French ideals and histories of anti-black injustice. After seven and half minutes of “Soon,” the audience applause was again thunderous and lasted for over forty seconds - the most lengthy audience response of any song in the program - to indicate that their desire for a performance *Afro-Americaine* otherness had been fulfilled. The next two songs would receive, respectively, considerably less audience enthusiasm, and the second longest applause of the program.

In juxtaposition to the songs that satisfied the attraction of *Afro-Americaine* performance, there were several instances where performances failed to achieve such otherness or only

partially delivered. For its ninth song the choir performed "Perfect Praise,[45]" (most often re-titled "Oh Lord How Excellent Is The Name") written by Brenda Joyce Moore and most originally recorded by Walt Whitman and The Soul Children of Chicago with Lucretia Campbell singing lead. However, Dream presented the song *without* a lead soloist and in that way departed from the original US Black American presentation. In one sense, the very inclusion of the song "Excellent" was one way that Dream ruptured the temporal distance found in most of the program. The song is one of three contemporary songs written after the 1970s that Dream performed, and this is perhaps because many long-time gospel music practitioners consider the song traditional despite its 1990 composition date. The harmonies are only moderately difficult, but singers are often required to hold notes at the extremities of vocal range for long periods making it potentially a strenuous song to deliver. In addition, the song's structure includes instances of vocal counterpoint in both the chorus and verse sections which make it almost impossible to perform as a solo. Still, the of the role of lead soloist in the original recording is to provide improvisation in a melismatic style and that improvisation is what makes the song most recognizable as Black US American music. Without the soloist providing the distinction of a recognizable Black vocal tradition, the song is not very different than a choral piece derived more from European sacred music traditions. Perhaps if the song's lyrical content was more in the Jubilee tradition, filled with references to suffering, labor, and reduced life chances, maybe it would then resonate as Black American. Instead, the lyrics are mostly taken directly from a Psalms passage, which is entirely a speech act of worship for the Divine. In spite of the song's

[45] Brenda Joyce Moore is the composer of "Perfect Praise" which is registered on BMI under her publishing company is Balutik's Music. This song is sometimes incorrectly attributed to Richard Smallwood whose song "Psalm 8" is based on a Bible passage with the phrase "How excellent is thy name."

significance within contemporary gospel music repertoires among US based choirs, the song as Dream presented it failed to announce itself as *Afro-Americaine* and therefore failed to assist with the process of creating or maintaining the imperial sound fantasy that concert goers might have expected.

Another example of failure in terms of performing *Afro-Americaine* otherness and foreignness might also signify success toward the assertion of an alternative French subject position when all that remains after said failure is the proximal performance of black-bodied Africans. The tenth song of the program that night was written by legendary Los Angeles musical and choir director, James Cleveland. The slow and dirge-like song, "What Shall I Do" was originally recorded live by Cleveland and the Southern California Community Choir in 1990, about a year before he died. Cleveland speaks the words, "if you never see me again" on the recording multiple times to foreshadow his own permanent departure. Even though the lyrics of the actual song do not directly address death, dying, and suffering, the narrative and affect of the song-leader satisfies that general expectation for much of traditional gospel music. Cleveland seems to have difficulty breathing and only speaks his narrative rather than actually singing as he has done for most of his career. Even so, the structure of the original recording counters the struggle of the lead singer by calling upon the very structure of gospel performance that is designed to give support or "bear up" the leading voice. Cleveland narrates phrases but the 150-voice choir delivers the story on his behalf. Although Cleveland is close to death, as he himself implies on the recording, he is not alone. The community choir is present and forms a 'body' that literally sings his words and signifies how a Black performance collective might stand in for the weakened individual as a function of the very form.

The Dream rendition of “What Shall I Do” departed from the structure of the original recording and delivered a different affect, which functioned to center a single body, and more specifically a single voice, apart from a “storm” of Black sound or *tumult noir*. In a manner similar to the song “Excellent," the tenth selection departed from the most recognizable *Afro-Americaine* elements of hand-clapping, swinging bodies, and melismatic vocality. Also, rather than the call-response delivery of the original version, the Dream version began with a woman vocalist who sang the entire chorus alone, stood in solitude, and rendered the affect of isolation. A very thin woman who was slightly shorter than average height moved to front of the performance space with the emptiness of the long center aisle directly before her. Her ebony colored skin was more ashy than luminous, and her large eyes were without twinkle as? she sang. In contrast to the other soloists, she avoided making eye contact with anyone either in the audience or in the performance group. Instead, she tilted her head slightly toward the vast ceiling so that her eyes only settled on a plane above the audience altogether.

In contrast to her counterparts throughout most of the concert, she never smiled, or laughed, or played during her performance. She sang with a blank facial expression and eyes that conveyed sincerity, “What shall I do, What step should I take, What move should I make, Oh Lord, what shall I do, I’m going to wait, For an answer from You, I have nothing to lose, Oh Lord, I'm going to wait.” Her voice sounded fragile and delicate but still filled the cathedral with “I know You'll come through, with a blessing for me, Please Lord set my soul free, Oh Lord, I know you'll come through.” Aside from the subdued electric piano, her voice travelled alone to lament, “I can't live without your help, I am weak all by myself.” She stood mostly still and her only sudden movements were the efforts made to take deep breaths before releasing notes that must have been the highest and loudest that she could produce to sing, “Lord please give me the

strength I need." As if that effort was all she could afford, her voice seemed to collapse into the explanation, "So I can possess eternal peace."

The departed from widely expected gospel music presentational form that yielded a failed performance of *Afro-Americaine* otherness but a successful performance of local and proximal black-bodied subjectivity. In conjunction with "all by myself" lyrics, the soloist's physical and affective detachment from both the choir and the audience is what might have yielded the failure and success. After singing the verse and chorus alone, the soloist continued to stand motionless, and, for the next stanza would speak, rather than sing, each line before the choir sang it. Instead of the expected call-and-response structure, their voices functioned as her echo. With her speaking volume just above a whisper asking the reflexive question, "what shall I do," the scene of the dark woman standing alone in a dark cathedral without *seeing* anyone else, produced the affect of a woman all alone in the world talking to God and to herself. The lead vocalist did not attempt to deliver melisma or the vocal dexterity commonly attributed to gospel or soul music but sang simple 'straight' notes. There seemed to be no effort on the part of the soloist to match the vocals of Tramaine Hawkins, highly regarded for her vocal virility spanning decades, who released a recording of the song in 1988. There seemed to be no effort on her part to sound or 'put on' aesthetic elements that Mahalia Jackson and others claimed for gospel music and marked as *Afro-Americaine*.. Instead, the black-bodied soloist's detachment from both the choir and the most recognizable *Afro-Americaine* aesthetics left concert goers with only her body standing alone and her voice singing "what shall I do?" in her own context as a black-bodied person living locally in Paris.

The actions of the audience help to evidence the soloist's failure to perform *Afro-Americaine,* which is to say the failure to perform foreignness and distance. Aside from the fact

that her applause was the loudest and second most lengthy of the entire program, lasting more than a half-minute and only interrupted by the musical introduction of the next song, the fact that many listeners were brought to tears for the first and only time during the concert suggests affective proximity and indicates some awareness of personal association on the part of listeners. For example, a white-bodied man sitting near me who looked about seventy-five seemed unable to halt the stream of water from his eyes during "What shall I do" while his woman companion rubbed his hand in a gesture of comfort. The soloist in her avoidance of *Afro-Americaine* aesthetics was able to rupture the construct of tourism defined as "elements dislodged from their original natural, historical and cultural contexts"[46] and resituate her performance in relation to the cultural context of black bodied people in Paris and in relation to French imperial history. Within the structure of the performance program, this rupture only lasted as long as the applause - about thirty-five seconds - while the soloist returned to her place on the risers as part of the choir. At that point, the saxophone player abruptly delivered a boogie-woogie introduction to the next uptempo song, "The Storm is Passing Over," which served as a transition to the final two selections of the program: "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In" and "Oh Happy Day."

The endings of the Dream concerts, and the endings of concerts like it all over the city, function to cover or correct ruptures and failures surrounding the performance of *Afro-Americaine* and help to re-establish the distance and Otherness promised by promotional posters. Performances of "Saints" and "Happy Day" work toward this end because of the way in which they signify historical moments in conjunction with the improvisational rituals that mark them as both US American and *Afro-Americaine.* It was Louis Armstrong who spurred the transnational

[46] MacCannell, Dean. *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. Univ of California Press, 1976., 13

circulation of “Saints” with a 1930s recording and as a recurring song at the end of subsequent performances. These performances include many arranged by the US State department and a famous duet of “Saints” with Mahalia Jackson toward the end of the 1970 Montreal Jazz festival themed as a tribute to Armstrong’s rendition for his seventieth birthday. Occasionally contemporary Paris gospel concert performers also give tribute to Armstrong during “Saints” with a vocal impersonation of his signature raspy voice and diction. Although the popularity of “Saints” throughout France and Paris in particular led to the incorporation of a French language version that sports fans now commonly sing at contemporary sporting events, this French version is avoided during gospel concerts. At Dream concerts in particular, after only a few moments of singing “Saints” in English, the lead vocalist stopped the song and addressed the listeners in French asking them to participate by singing the tune of song with “La La La” if they did not know the (English) words. The commitment to performing the song in English is evidence of how the Dream performance is anchored to the history of the song *before* it was incorporated into contemporary Paris sports rituals and still primarily associated with US Ambassador Armstrong through US imperial circuits. In some ways, this orientation toward English speakers confirms a posture of presentation, rather than participation, to demonstrate the absence of “ring shout” model that turns the performance inward so that participants face themselves. In this context, the performance in English by performers who, in many cases, do not speak even English is symptomatic of performance that is service. The performances can be interpreted as for the English speakers with little support the idea that they are performing *for* themselves.

In a similar vein, the usage of “Happy Day” sounds a specific historical and cultural moment and the placement of the song at the end of concerts works to resolve the dissonance between foreign and local when black-bodied French citizens of African descent living in Paris

perform *Afro-Americaine.* The "happy" chorus sounded at the end of concerts suggests that burdens, loneliness, death, and dying referenced throughout the rest of the program - and associated with the Civil Rights movement - all get resolved by 1967 when the "happy" song started to circulate widely. The songwriter of "Oh Happy Day" was Oakland, CA musician and choir director Walter Hawkins who recorded the song at Ephesian Church of God In Christ in Berkley, CA. Hawkins was family friends with Sylvester Stewart, also known as Sly Stone, and the two were musicians in the same Bay Area religious community. The radio station were Stone worked as a DJ as he developed his own secular music career was where "Oh Happy Day" got its first spins within a secular radio format in 1967 before being picked up nationally as a pop record in 1968. The song is significant not only because it transcended the genre distinction of "gospel" that Mahalia Jackson and others had worked to claim, but also because the lyrics marked a departure from the language of oppression and dying that constituted most of gospel music until that point. Although the lyrics radically suggest in the bridge that the pathway to happiness is learning to *"fight"* and pray - which was compatible with an influential culture of resistance in Oakland at that time - the more recognized "happy" lyrics of the chorus are the active lyrics across Paris gospel concerts. By concluding the concerts with the temporal space of 1967, the program satisfies the promise of an *Afro-Americaine* performance but avoids more contemporary "Black" performance, which might either reference a continued history of oppression, death, and dying for black-bodied US Americans, or be too easily be associated with the new and emerging Black French subjectivities.

Finally, the closing improvisational rituals, within which "Saints" and "Oh Happy Day" are embedded, constitute the final presentation of embodied difference and the climax of the *Afro-Americaine* attraction. It is most likely during these two songs, often with consecutively

delivery, that visitors and residents can witness iterations of Marion Williams' signature performance movements - walking through the aisles and interacting with audience members in a theatrical manner. Just as Aretha Franklin reenacted Williams's signature performance as a tribute to her during the 1993 Kennedy Center Honors event where Williams looked on as an honoree, Paris performers deliver reenactments of the ritual weekly but without attribution. Williams delivery was situated within broader tradition of gospel music improvisation rituals that she inherited, which include rigorous hand clapping, dancing, and a ritual of vocal repetition.

The significance of Williams' very specific contribution to Paris concerts in particular is that she helped to merge subculture folk traditions for religious participation with commercial practices for popular presentation in ways that had not been accomplished before she emerged. Williams developed performance techniques from folk practices, in conversation with her contemporaries and antecedents, that circulated through theater productions and film representations until her signature mode of performance became *the* standard for presentational gospel music. It was Williams who championed a style that bridged sacred practices with secular or profane spaces in ways that Mahalia Jackson refused. While Jackson insisted on claiming a narrow space for gospel music, Williams' career negotiated new spaces for the form within theater and popular music industries so that her performance practices could easily be associated with jazz or blues. It is this negotiation - the synthesis of sacred folk tradition with secular commercial presentation along a continuum of Black music and dance - that Williams perfected into her own signature performance during a fifty-year career transnationally. It is this negotiation that Paris performers enact weekly to embody an attraction that is distinctly *Afro-Americaine*.

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