Perilous Pop: Ragtime, Jazz and Progressive Social Thought in the Early 20th Century Press, 1900-1930

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Dawne Belloise, and to Dennis Giacomo

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Prologue

"If music is bad for youth, it is calamitous for women." [1]
--Nietzsche

When I started to research the jazz controversy as it appeared in the early twentieth century press, I expected to discover the usual complaints about how music contributes to youthful delinquency and to the moral demise of women and girls in particular. I intended to begin this introduction with the above quote, from which I would unravel complaints about the feminization of mass culture through the emblematic figure of the flapper. This dissertation, however, is no longer about flappers.

I also imagined that a close study of those debates would confirm my assumptions about how mediated panics work: dominant groups circulate hyperbolic messages about the dangers of youth subculture, or the ill-effects of certain musical forms, and for various ideological purposes that should be obvious to the astute critic. But in the course of this project I encountered an incredibly thorny, complicated and sometimes obtuse set of historical texts that resisted easy efforts at critical analysis and skirted my best attempts to apply totalizing theories. Concerns about jazz involved not only musical sounds, but musical spaces, dance practices, subcultures—youthful and otherwise—

[1] For Nietzsche, the popularization of opera and the unwelcome novelty of female audiences threatened the autonomous production of masculine art. He complains, for instance, that Wagnerian opera denigrated music by catering to the demands of "adoring women." Composers admired by those feminine masses eventually and inevitably "condescend to the level of women," by offering only sentimental narratives and scores fraught with "perpetual melody." In an often overlooked postscript he also suggests that women swoon at the expense of their own social and cultural development. "Woman impoverishes herself in the Master," he writes, "she becomes quite touching, she stands naked before him." "Naked" and "parasitic," woman is configured here as the vulnerable and vaguely sexualized muse of the popular. "The Case of Richard Wagner" is one early instance in which music's purported effects on women equivocate specifically modern anxieties about the ways in which women affect music; feminine audiences challenged concepts of "high" art and by extension masculine cultural authority. (The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner, trrans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967). For further elaboration, see Andreas Huyssen "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernisms 'Other,'" in After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1986.

gender relations, miscegenation, factory labor, suffrage, bolshevism (really, bolshevism), "voodoo," commercial leisure, and the demise of the bourgeois marriage, to name a few.

Even more detrimental to organization and expediency, I made two "discoveries" in the course of this research that could not be ignored. First, as most music historians already know, the jazz panic started with ragtime. Though frequently separated in cultural histories, the two musical forms sometimes appear in tandem during the war years as conjoined threats to an already tenuous social order. In other words, the jazz panic entered and extended a pre-existing discourse about ragtime music. Moreover, many of the *same* critics who complained about ragtime reappeared in the popular press in order to lodge identical complaints against jazz. Second, then, recognizing the co-extension of these two controversies threw into relief one frequently overlooked but entirely relevant historical fact. The majority of complaints about early century pop music, at least as they appeared in the popular press, were issued by *progressive reformers*: Evangelicals involved in the social gospel movement, settlement house workers, recreation activists, dance reformers, social scientists, new professionals and activist judges.

Although jazz historians occasionally make passing references to these activists, accounts of the panic generally ignore its sources. For me, this "discovery" raised a fascinating and novel set of research questions: why did progressive efforts, often aimed at improving urban conditions in the wake of industrialization, include these particular aesthetic forms and social practices? In what ways did music unsettle progressive attempts to establish or re-establish public order? How did ragtime and jazz pose an affront to the project of progress? This dissertation explores what I call the early century music controversy—debates about ragtime and jazz music and dance—as it appears in

the popular press and as it articulates the assumptions and contradictions of progressive social thought.

Mass Music and Public Culture

In her essay "Same as it Ever Was: Youth Culture and Music," musicologist and historian Susan McClary points out that "diatribes against the music produced by or for the young pockmark the historical record as far back as Plato…" Indeed, traces of contempt for certain musical forms appear in *The Republic* and in *Laws*, where Plato bemoans Lydian flutes and lauds the authoritarian function of the military march. As McClary explains, Plato's complaints about music and those subsequent in western history involve "twin threats—subversion of authority and seduction by means of the body."[2] Plato warns that certain music "instills a thirst for liberty," and that its appeals to the body circumvent the paternalist commands that otherwise hold subjects in place.

Adversaries of syncopated pop music produced around the turn of the twentieth century certainly reiterate Plato's denouncements. As dance music that originated in the social margins, both ragtime and jazz were said to make disruptive appeals to the body, suspend social restraints, and unsettle the previous century's moral order. Unlike Lydian flutes, however, ragtime and jazz arrived in tandem with the advent of sound recording and reproduction technologies, as well as a suddenly prolific print media. Early century syncopated pop arguably qualifies as one of the first—if not *the* first—*mass* music and simultaneously, the first music culture(s) subject to the scrutiny of a well-circulated popular press. Hence, while moral panics about music clearly predate industrial

[2] Susan McClary, "Same as it Ever Was: Youth Culture and Music," in Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture, New York: Routledge, 1994, pg. 30).

modernity in the West, ragtime and jazz became the fulcrum for debates, not only about youth, but about mass media and their relationship to a changing public culture.

Prior to the widespread consumption of records, phonographs and radios, the production of sheet music and piano rolls popularized ragtime and jazz music. As historian Reebee Garafalo explains, Tin Pan Alley's ragtime songs descended from the popular culture of the printing press: "an inheritance that came from European colonization."[3] The "recording industry" at this moment consisted of a loose collection of musicians and composers whose products alarmed not only "arbiters of taste," but those who associated standardization—even in aesthetic forms—with the dehumanization and de-individuation of factory labor and mass consumption. Theodor Adorno, of course, offers the most famous example of that conflation between the perils of industrial standardization and mass music. In his "On Popular Music," Adorno writes,

> Structural standardization aims at standard reactions. Listening to popular music is manipulated not only by its promoters, but as it were, by the inherent nature of the music itself, into a system of response mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society.[4]

Adorno's criticisms resonate with this research because progressive social reformers issued similar complaints about the effects of standardization on a "free and liberal society." While not all of their concerns about music and dance focused on mechanical

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[3]Reebee Garofalo, Rockin Out: Popular Music in the U.S.A (New York: Prentice-Hall, 2007), pg. 2. That the printing press is a colonial inheritance is significant for two reasons. First, post-colonial conditions in the United States threw intro relief the inherent contradictions of a liberal democracy founded on the colonialist venture. Second, the printing press, which created the public culture of the bourgeoisie, also produced a mass music culture, which, I argue, challenged that ideal public in a variety of ways.

[4] Reprinted in Essays on Music, ed. Richard Leppert, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pg. 442.

aesthetics, progressives shared Adorno's belief that industrialization had derailed the project of Enlightenment progress, and that the "the music of the machine age" both made manifest and reproduced that historical regression. Thus, ragtime and jazz figured prominently in their efforts to recuperate "progress" and to reconfigure public culture in ways that better reflected bourgeois ideals.[5]

For Adorno, the problem with standardized music was its ability to impose uniform modes of listening. More importantly (and a point often lost in popular music scholarship), Adorno worried that standardized music displaced the intellectual liberties central to bourgeois liberalism and to the project of Enlightenment progress. Tin Pan Alley's song standards made "reason" serve instrumental (ideological) purposes through structural and sonic clichés that encouraged listeners to compulsively anticipate the next note. For Adorno and other Frankfurt School theorists, the arrival of mass music signaled that Enlightenment "reason," originally meant to liberate the individual subject, now had been turned against the ideals of individual freedom. Hence, mass music pointed to the demise of the bourgeois public in which, as Kant writes, enlightened democracy might be achieved through "the public use of reason."[6] Adorno concludes that music's utopian

[5] I describe progressivism extensively in "Chapter One: Progressivism."

[6]Significantly, Adorno and Horkheimer riffed on "What is the Enlightenment," in The Dialectic of the Enlightenment (trans. John Cummings, New York: Continuum, 1999). Here, they argue that bourgeois liberalism and scientific rationalism produced the conditions for historical regression. For instance, the use of "instrumental reason," evidence of which Adorno finds in popular music, among other places," constitutes the regressive application of "the public use of reason;" in other words, according to Adorno, reason had run amok. Pop music scholars frequently ignore or forget that Adorno's dialectical criticism of the culture industry means to point to the end of Enlightenment progress. He laments not only how the tenets of liberalism and rationalism failed to produce a bourgeois utopia in the modern democratic nation state and via laissez-faire economics, but the ways in which those tenets seemed to produce the very conditions that disrupted those aims. Progressive philosophies that similarly associate ragtime and jazz with the effects of industrial standardization and industrial culture, more generally, throw into relief *why* some early twentieth century critics understood mass music as an affront to the realization of progress.

potential now lies in its ability to produce "a carefully cultivated reserve of the irrational in the midst of the rationalized universe."[7]

As inheritors of what Michael Warner describes as the "liberal tradition," most progressives hoped to produce a "rationalized universe," or, at least, to create an orderly public culture founded on certain Enlightenment principles.[8] Like Adorno, some reformers associated mass music with industrial standardization and, at times, with the dehumanizing conditions of industrial labor. Others considered dance music disruptive precisely for its appeal to the "irrational," the sensuous or the "primitive." Ragtime and jazz signaled at once the ascendency of industrial aesthetics (syncopation, for instance, repeats the rhythms of factories and urban streets) and the public incursion of black and working-class cultural forms. Both, of course, troubled the concept of "high" art hitched to notions of autonomy and individualism. In either case, ragtime and jazz appeared to reflect or produce public cultures at odds with the tenets of bourgeois liberalism. As

[7]Reprinted in Essays on Music, ed. Richard Leppert, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, pg. 442.

[8]In his Public and Counter Publics, Michael Warner describes the "liberal tradition" as a set of philosophies that recognize "private persons" as the "proper site of humanity." The "private person," Warner explains, "possesses publicly relevant rights by virtue of being private persons." Further, Warner claims that the "liberal tradition" imagines an ideal public culture as one in which "private vices" or the pursuit of self-interest works for the "public good" (New York: Zone Books, 2005, pgs. 39-40). Hence, the doctrine of laissez-faire economics and the notion of individual rights endemic to modern, capitalist democracies, reflect the "liberal tradition." I argue that progressive social reformers often preserved the individualist ideologies specific to that tradition. (The idea of "social uplift," for instance, is predicated on the education of the individual, rather than the rights of groups or classes). Many progressives also offered poignant critiques of unchecked capitalism and its various iniquities, including the industrial injustices that they associated, however unfairly, with novel music and dance cultures. Thus, to "clean up" public culture also meant to resuscitate the utopian promise of bourgeois liberalism. That project was complicated by the historical moment; the early twentieth century American public swelled with the influx of immigrants from Eastern and Sothern Europe, among other places, with African-American migrants, and with white middle and upper-class women.

auditory media, popular music seemed to compete with the individuating logics of print culture and, by extension, with the liberal tradition.[9]

Print media originally had constituted the bourgeois public and provided the vehicle for its enlightened "use of reason." In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* Jürgen Habermas argues that print technology, in fact, heralds the beginning of the end, or at least the beginning of a "post-bourgeois" public. If the dissemination of printed materials once circulated ideas intrinsic to liberalism—the notion of individual rights, for instance—it also produced a much larger reading public that demanded inclusion in that otherwise exclusive order. This, in turn, revealed that the bourgeois public, and the tenets of a liberal democracy founded on the "individual," always *were* exclusionary.[10] As Nancy Fraser points out in her "Rethinking the Public Sphere," even the purportedly egalitarian spaces of the salon banked on various class and gender distinctions. Women's participation in these institutions solicited what Fraser describes as a "masculinist" reaction that reconstituted "public" and "private" as gendered and antithetical spaces, and that further hitched the separation of spheres to class distinction. Fraser explains that, during the 19th century,

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[9] Marshall McLuhan, among others, describes the logics of print in Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man: "Print is the extreme phase of alphabet culture that detribalizes or de-collectivizes man in the first instance. Print raises the visual features of alphabet to highest intensity of definition. Thus print carries the individuating power of the phonetic alphabet much further than manuscript culture could ever do. *Print is the technology of individualism*" (my emphasis) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), pg. 10.

[10] The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, (trans. Thomas Berger, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

> …new gender norms enjoining feminine domesticity and a sharp separation of private and public spheres functioned as key signifiers of bourgeois difference from both higher and lower social strata. It is a measure of the eventual success of this bourgeois project that these norms later became hegemonic, sometimes imposed on, sometimes embraced by, broader segments of society."[11]

Hence, the "ideal public sphere" as an *egalitarian* discursive space in which the new bourgeoisie might debate and challenge the institutions of the state never existed as such.[12] Habermas acknowledges that his essay meant to call attention to the decline of Enlightenment ideals—that is, to the dissolution of bourgeois liberalism in the face of 20th century economic and political upheavals—even though these ideals never fully materialized. More significantly, perhaps, he claims that mass media produced the possibility of that ideal public *and* created the conditions of its demise.[13]

For progressive reformers invested in the liberal tradition and other Enlightenment age inheritances, mass music similarly posed the problem of a more democratically accessible public by popularizing musical forms and dance practices associated with the social margins, and by unsettling the socio-spatial divisions on which the bourgeois public once pivoted. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, some reformers complained about the alarmingly heterogeneous and promiscuous spaces of the dance halls and cabarets. Others claimed that jazz "lured" women away from their

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[11] "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26, 1990, pg. 60.

[12] The exclusivities of the public sphere pivoted on the notion of the "private person," the autonomous individual who increasingly came to be defined as white, land-owning and male.

[13] For Adorno, the "debased" public produced through mass culture is the result of standardizations. For Habermas, the problem with mass media is that their ability to reach wide audiences also splintered the public into competing interest groups. Like Adorno, then, Habermas understands mass media as the bad ends of Enlightenment "progress," in part for its corruption of a public culture founded on Enlightenment principles.

domestic posts and into these dangerous publics. Critics warned that ragtime smuggled the sounds of the "brothel" into the bourgeois parlor on piano rolls and sheet music. Further, the widespread adoption of "lower" class dance forms defied the sorts of public behaviors expected of the middle and upper-classes, and of women in particular. While music certainly did not create a more egalitarian society, musical spaces and dance practices radically changed the way in which the American public socialized.

Andreas Huyssen argues that complaints about mass culture coincide with the discursive transformation of the "public" into the politically threatening "masses." "The hidden subject of the mass culture debate," he argues "is precisely 'the masses'—their political and cultural aspirations, their struggles and their pacification."[14] Ragtime and jazz arrived in Northern cities and to popular audiences at the peak of African-American migration, and at a moment when white women more often began to appear in factories, streets and dance halls. Thus, I argue that music and dance operated as the fulcrum for struggles over precisely how to reconstitute public culture in the wake of a swelling *public*—to determine who may participate and in what ways. I use the term "culture" rather than "sphere" in order to heed Fraser's warning that "sphere" incorrectly "has been used by many feminists to refer to everything that is outside the domestic or familial sphere."[15] By public "culture," then, I mean commerce and labor, public amusements,

[14] After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pg. 47.
[15] "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26, 1990, pg.57.

public discourse, public spaces and the various *publics* generated within or throughout those spaces and discourses.[16]

In Chapter One (*Progressivism*), I describe progressivism as a "set of shared ideas" that crystallized in response to the conditions of industrial modernity. Unchecked capitalism and urban growth produced, among other things, crowded tenements, the injustices of factory labor, and debased industrial products. In addition, the influx of immigrants, Northern migration, and, of course, the increasing public presence of women, contributed to what Lawrence Levine calls "the sense of looming chaos" endemic to the early century.[17] To recuperate "progress," then, meant to create a more ordered modernity, one that benefited from both moral reasoning and scientific rationalism. Ultimately, I argue that ragtime and jazz, as "the music of the machine age" were swept up in broad efforts to reconfigure public culture in a way that better reflected bourgeois ideals.

Chapter Two (*Music, Paternalism, Progress)* explores warnings about musical sound—both the invasive faculty of music as an auditory medium, and the ways in which sounds in this case signified the dangers of miscegenation. Here, I argue that ragtime and jazz threatened the project of "progress" by intruding on boundaries meant to secure the sexual entitlement and cultural authority of white men. In the most vehement writings against African-American music, the feminine body, the bourgeois household and the spaces of the nation become metaphorically interchangeable. The early century popular

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[16] At times, however, the debates about music and dance, particularly when they involve progressive appeals for state interventions, or arguments about the ways in which orderly amusements might produce ideal social subjects/citizens, clearly illustrate a struggle to resuscitate or reinvent the public "sphere."

[17] Levine, Lawrence, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America , Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, pg. 176.

press, in fact, is rife with concerns about music's capacity to penetrate these various (and clearly *feminine*) borders. Reformers and critics complained about the ways in which black music "infected" the body, invaded the home and trespassed across the country's social and geographic perimeters.

In Chapter Three (*The Dangers of the Dance Hall),* I describe the ways in which musical spaces—dance halls and cabarets—seemed to disrupt a progress linked to bourgeois *maternalism*. Women reformers hoped to unhitch "progress" from the gendered division of spheres and to create a public culture in which they could productively participate. The ragtime and jazz dance halls constantly challenged those efforts. First, the behaviors of girls who frequented the dance halls undermined assumptions about women's inherent morality, and thus, the authority of women reformers, who justified their participation in public culture as an extension of the maternal gesture. In response, activists attempted to "cultivate" the working girl and to teach standards of behavior that reflected the gender expectations of the white bourgeoisie—rather than those associated the new heterogeneous, urban, industrial culture. Second, and after prohibition, rowdy dance halls and mixed-race cabarets, often hidden in the recesses of the city, defied progressive efforts to create a more rational public culture through the careful and visual ordering of public space.

Chapter Four (*Modern Dancing)* explores the controversy about ragtime and jazz dance, as well as reform efforts meant to retrain wayward bodies. African-American and working-class dance styles seemed to offer white middle class dancers proscribed access to unsanctioned pleasures. Of course, the co-optation of these cultural forms in no way unsettled race and class privileges; the aesthetics of popular "primitivism" reiterated

racist associations and assumptions. I suggest, however, that for many critics, the popularization of these dances seemed to collapse some of the distances by which the white bourgeoisie made itself distinct from the new urban masses—blacks, immigrants, and working women. Writings in the early century press suggest that "modern" dancing created novel intimacies, both literal and figurative, between men and women, strangers in public spaces, and variously raced and classed bodies. The enthusiastic embrace of these dance styles signaled, for some critics, the dangerous *incorporation* of differences. On the dance floors in urban centers, bodies were said to "blur" in motion. Hence, I argue, dance seemed to present a new kinesthetic sensibility which, like other forms of mass culture, threatened to annihilate both social and corporeal boundaries.

Moral Panics

New print and auditory media proliferated in tandem around the turn of the last century. While sound recording technologies created a wider audience for black and working-class music, technological advances in print and paper production made an increasingly literate public accessible to the arguments of white, bourgeois social reformers. Advertising revenue and changes in postal rates made newspapers and journals more affordable and, by the end of nineteenth century, over 1,600 daily newspapers circulated in the United States. In addition, inexpensive wood pulp and photoengraving techniques produced glossy magazines like *The Ladies Home Journal*, *Life*, and *Collier'*s, all of which published numerous exposés on the dangers of music and dance.[18]

[18] These glossy journals also published numerous exposés on the dangers of music and dance.

I use the term "moral panic" throughout this dissertation critically and cautiously. A close examination of debates surrounding early 20th century music challenges some of the received wisdom about moral panics and, moreover, throws into relief the reductions and omissions of ragtime and jazz histories that situate the controversy entirely in those terms. To begin, Sociologist Stanley Cohen coined the term "moral panic" to describe media discourse about the dangers of youth subculture, although he intended the phrase to refer, more universally, to the media's construction of social menace. Cohen's 1972 *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers* defines a "moral panic," as an instance when:

> A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned [sic] by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or more often, resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes less visible.[19]

Cohen's work was groundbreaking for its assertion that media do not merely report dramatic events, but "shape" and "define" the public's understanding of aberrant behavior through remote "diagnoses." [20] Cohen argues that a sudden rash of "deviancy"

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[19]Stanley Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers, New York: Martin and Robinson, 1980, pg. 9.

[20]Sociologists and critical media theorists continue to cite his definition of "moral panic," (as I have here) despite that its language and insights seem a bit dated in an academy now seeped in the assumptions of post-structuralism. Cohen ascribed to a novel set of theories called "symbolic transactionalism" which were influenced by the arguments of Derrida and Kuhn. In 1972, the "constructionist" or "constructivist" approach was new to sociology. Cohen's arguments, of course, also resonate with Foucault's assertions about a discursive power that labels, individuates, and "diagnoses"—a term that Cohen also uses. Cohen,

may not reflect any significant changes in behavioral patterns, but instead illustrate the power of sensationalist media to describe social conditions as *dire*.[21]

Particularly significant to this dissertation is Cohen's often overlooked assertion that "the media have long operated as agents of moral indignation in their own right; even if they are not consciously engaged in muck-raking." Without exploring that claim any further, Cohen suggests that contemporary moral panics descend from the project of exposure first initiated by progressive social reformers. Arguably, then the early century music panic set the precedent for the "moral panics" that followed—from complaints about Rosie the Riveter, to diatribes against Heavy Metal, to Tipper Gore's injunctions against rap music in the 1990's.

Further, while Cohen's arguments provide insights about the media's power to diagnose social menace, he fails to consider the mechanisms by which "aberrant" behaviors are linked to broader social issues, and to the policing of public culture. Stuart Hall et al. better address these questions in their 1978 essay, "The Changing Shapes of 'Panics.'" Hall offers a more complicated description of the processes by which media transform a dramatic event or vaguely threatening group into a monstrous social problem. He describes this process as a "spiral of signification" which hitches one set of social problems to another, and eventually creates a "mapping together of moral panics into a general panic about social order." For instance, the phrase "student hooliganism," which emerged in the 1960's as a response to the anti-war movements on campuses, associated

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however, operates under assumptions of a more monolithic power, by which the media "silences" rather than contains and makes visible various forms of social dissent or "deviance."

[21] At the very least, a concerted study of the ragtime and jazz panic offers an historical account of the ways in which anxieties about "youth culture" often run parallel to the development of mass media; this dissertation also attempts to reconnect the that "moral panic" to the logics of muckraking and to progressive social thought.

peaceful student protests with violence and vandalism.[22] In this way, the media helped to legitimate excessive disciplinary actions by the state and, through the logics of association, made student complaints about an oppressive and militant culture a vehicle for oppression and militancy.[23]

Ultimately, Hall et al. argue that the "general panic about social order" works to win public "consent" for disciplinary actions as well as the ideological assumptions that legitimate such deeds. While Cohen offers that media panics set up moral barricades on behalf of "right-thinking people," Hall recognizes that moral panics also work to sustain the assumptions that hold those authorities in place. Opposing views and protests, they argue, are swept up in this "spiral" and "thus reproduce the arena of signification as a field of ideological struggle."[24] In other words, moral panics serve to legitimate power by circulating a set of injunctions against specific types of behaviors and justifying a concerted political or social response. Moreover, Hall here gestures towards what pop music and panic historian Roy Shuker better articulates: "At a deeper level, moral panics…are episodes in cultural politics and the continual reconstitution and contestation of cultural hierarchy."[25]

Finally, Angela McRobbie adds that moral panics also may work to obfuscate other pressing social issues:

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[22] Similarly, I suggest that the youth crisis in the early century associated music and dance, aesthetic forms and social practices, with the problems of urban industrialization.
[23] "The Changing Shape of 'Panics'," in Critical Readings: Moral Panics and the Media, ed. Chas Critcher. (New York: Open University Press, 2006), pgs. 41-49.
[24] "The Changing Shape of 'Panics'," in Critical Readings: Moral Panics and the Media, ed. Chas Critcher. (New York: Open University Press, 2006), pg. 45.
[25] Roy Shuker, Understanding Popular Music, (New York: Routledge, 2008), pg. 219.

> Moral panic is about instilling fear in people and in so doing, encouraging them to try and turn away from the complexity of and the visibility of the social problems of everyday life and either to retreat into a fortress mentality—a feeling of hopelessness, political powerlessness, and paralysis—or to adopt a "gung-ho" something must be done about it attitude."[26]

McRobbie's arguments suggest that moral panics not only treat "symptoms" like a social disease, but *are themselves symptomatic* of unearthed social problems. Talking about a "folk devil" prevents us from discussing "real" issues. Notably, in this formulation, the task of the cultural critic is to describe how media construct a "problem" and explain what the problem *is really about.* Hence, the rhetoric of exposure that infuses moral panics likewise influences the media scholarship that hopes to explain said discourse.

This shared logic presents media critics with more than a methodological conundrum, it points to one of the significant omissions in Cohen's arguments and to one of the questions I hope to address in this dissertation. Moral panics about media often (though not *always*) converge around musical subcultures—in other words, around the purported "effects" of *auditory* media. Cohen's "Mods and Rockers" may serve as a spectacle for the "agents of moral indignation," but rock and ska provide these groups with their shared social identities. For this reason, the early century music panic might be understood in terms of competing *technē* and their attendant episteme: the authority of the written word and the printing press set out against the intrusive sounds of a now reproducible music. The ragtime and jazz controversy, although not always about *sound*, illustrates that musical cultures sometimes confound an understanding of "public" contingent on the divisions and individuations associated with visual literacy and by

[26]Angela McRobbie, Postmodernism and Popular Culture, (New York: Routledge, 1994), pg. 199.

extension, of course, with the "liberal tradition." Perhaps musical forms become the objects of mediated panics precisely because they appeal to the auditory, and because auditory cultures *may* offer an alternative way of experiencing public and/or social identity.[27] In any case, as I argue in the following chapter, the types of knowledge said to have been produced by ragtime and jazz—knowledge about the body, about sex, about various "unseen" forces—also disrupted a concept of "progress" that was hitched to the logics of sight and to print culture. Thus, I suggest that the object of panic ought to matter to cultural critics, for reasons beyond that it solicits unwarranted outrage.

While moral panic literature is useful in that it points to the ways in which mass media operate to police public culture, rally public opinion, or obscure important issues, the term "moral panic" may reduce or de-contextualize mediated controversies. In her excellent *Club Cultures,* Sarah Thorton warns that:

> "'Moral panic' is a metaphor which depicts a complex society as a single person who experiences sudden groundless fear about its virtue. Although the term serves the purposes of the recording industry and the music press well by inflating the threat posed by subcultures, its anthropomorphism and totalization mystify more than they reveal."[28]

Thorton claims that the term "moral panic" tells us little about either the nature of specific cultural fears or the "virtues" that these panics aim to protect. While both Hall and Shuker rightly argue that moral panics function as cites of, respectively,

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[27] I make this argument in Chapter Two, where I cite Simon Frith's assertion: "What music does is put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social forces" (Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, pg. 276).

[28] Sarah Thorton, Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital, Hannover, University Press of New England, 1996, pg.136.

"ideological" and "hegemonic" struggle, neither explain precisely which virtues, hegemonies or ideologies those struggles involve. In other words, critiques of popular "panics" often *presume to know the adversary* and, again, sometimes dismiss a complicated debate as the shrill outrage of squeamish moralizers. In so doing, cultural critics also make hyperbolic "folk devils" of the panicked media outlets in question. In later chapters, I attempt to redress this problem by exploring the rationale of the various progressive reformers who rallied against the public practices associated with ragtime and jazz music.

"Moral panic" also runs the risk of imagining the object of panic as innocuous, ineffectual—a scarecrow. As Thorton notes, the term suggests a "sudden groundless fear." I want to point out that the objects and subjects of a "panic" are not necessarily inert; student protestors in the 1960's did alter the political terrain of the western world. Likewise, ragtime and jazz indisputably changed American cultural forms and social practices. I do *not* mean to imply, however, that various media constructed "folk devils" deserve the hyperbolic, paranoid labeling and diagnoses, or the disciplinary interventions that they often receive. Nor do I believe that a panicked media offers accurate descriptions of purportedly "dangerous" social groups. Obviously "Folk devils" rarely produce the kinds of trouble for which they are often blamed. My research suggests, however, that certain cultural practices indeed prove disruptive to social order, and particularly that grounded in race, class and gender divisions.

Oversimplifications plague the already limited set of studies about the early century music controversy, which opens a space for more incisive research. Histories of the ragtime and jazz panic tend to focus on jazz to the exclusion of ragtime, and often hail

from either sociology or literary criticism. Given that sociology generally concerns itself with questions about cultural practice, rather than aesthetics, these accounts usually understand the jazz panic as a result of misplaced anxieties about "monumental cultural changes." Moreover, following Stanley Cohen's lead, sociological studies of the jazz controversy often describe the debate as one in which conservative factions attempted to erect "moral barricades" against media-made stereotypes.

Neil Leonard produced one of the earliest accounts, *Jazz and White Americans: The Acceptance of a New Art Form.* Leonard understands the jazz controversy as a set of diametrically opposed sides: "modernists," versus "traditionalists." Here, he argues that white "modernists" adopted jazz as a means to escape the repressions of industrial culture, the emotional restraints of "whiteness," and the sexual taboos of the bourgeoisie. While his research presents a fairly compelling and now standard story about why white Americans went "slumming" in Harlem and Chicago's South Side, he fails to describe why "traditionalists" opposed such practices. In fact, he offers very little indication about who precisely balked at the popular adoption of jazz music and dance. More significantly, perhaps, his labels suggest that those in favor of jazz embraced "modernity," while "traditionalists" rallied for a return to the previous century's social order. My research indicates that, although some of the reform factions that opposed jazz hoped for a return to more "idyllic," pre-industrial times or to the rigidly gendered division of spheres, others aimed to reconfigure "modernity" in ways that better reflected bourgeois ideals. In other words, describing the adversaries of jazz as "traditionalist"

ignores not only the rhetorical multiplicities of the debates, but the ways in which jazz adversaries imagined a more ideal public culture.[29]

Robert O'Meally's 1964 *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture* imagines the jazz debates in terms of "christian" and "anti-christian" factions. O'Meally culls most of his evidence from the complaints issued by conservative Evangelicals, some of whom I cite in the following chapters. O'Meally argues that Christians decried jazz music for its purported links to "voodoo," and its appeal to "savagery." Those who embraced the music, then, did so to reject the trapping of "civilization," including the moral impositions of a Christian culture. Although, O'Meally acknowledges the link between white, Christian ideologies and racism, his reductive formulation of the controversy ignores the implications of that connection. As in most accounts, O'Meally fails to recognize that many Evangelicals also worked as progressive reformers. Hyperbolic warnings that jazz music might herald the "decline of civilization" also pronounced concerns about "progress." Using some of the same materials, I argue further that racist tirades against jazz music illuminate the degree to which bourgeois progress pivoted not only on exclusions, but the colonial exploitations that, in fact, produced the trappings of "civilization." Moreover, I point out that the "Christian" factions opposed to jazz music adhered to a specifically American Protestantism which understood moral, social and economic progress as the direct result of personal *restraint.* Public dance practices, as I

[29] Neil Leonard, Jazz and White Americans: The Acceptance of a New Art Form, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

demonstrate in the following chapters, clearly defied the Protestant reserve once pivotal to the project of progress.[30]

Kathy Ogren's germinal 1986 *Jazz Revolution*: *American Culture and the Meaning of Jazz,* better addresses questions about how racism and fears of miscegenation influenced the popular reception of jazz music. Her research mainly focuses on the performance practices of African-American musicians. Ogren makes astute arguments about how improvisation and audience participation challenged the reserved spectatorship of the white bourgeoisie. Her book also includes two chapters on the jazz panic as it appears in the popular press. "From Devil's Music to Jooking" explores debates about jazz in the African-American papers. Here, Ogren argues that concerns about ragtime and jazz usually involved problems associated with Northern migration. African-American Evangelicals, for instance, worried that new musical forms and the ways in which they were performed might attract negative attention from the white community. Because ragtime and jazz first appeared in brothels and dance halls, many decried the zoning laws that relegated urban vice to African-American neighborhoods.

Ogren clearly and thoroughly describes the complexity of the debates that took place in the African-American press. Her depiction of the controversy in white owned papers, however, reiterates many of the assumptions that appear in earlier histories. For instance, Ogren chapter on "Prudes and Primitives" borrows its reductive title from F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story, and renders a similarly simplified account. To be fair, Ogren offers a succinct and useful explanation of jazz primitivism, although she neglects to describe the "prudes":

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[30] Jazz Cadence of American Culture, ed. Robert. G. O'Meally, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

> Inspired by Sigmund Freud and others who documented the repression presumed endemic to Western civilization, twenties artists and intellectuals invested primitive culture with uncivilized virtues—particularly sexual freedom. African plastic arts were one source of knowledge about primitivism; the other, closer to home, was black culture, especially musical performance…Experiencing jazz could release and rejuvenate emotions and instincts, thus liberating an inner and perhaps more creative person.[31]

In this case, Ogren describes the jazz controversy as a contest between white "primitives" who, again, adopted dance to resist the trappings of an implicitly failed "civilization," and "prudes" who opposed jazz on moral grounds. By configuring the jazz controversy as an extension of earlier debates about ragtime, my project means to account for the rhetoric of the "prudes." More specifically, I address ideas about "civilization" and its progress to which "primitivism" responded. Jazz enthusiasts, in fact, frequently rejected the "rational" public culture that progressive social reformers hoped to create. In the wake of World War One, and in light of the disasters associated with industrialization, "primitivists" often rejected the idea of *progress*. [32]

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[31]Kathy Ogren, The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pg.146.

[32] More complicated depictions of the controversy often mine the trope of jazz primitivism within the project of literary modernism, or posit the panic in terms of "high" and "low" culture. The jazz controversy as it appears in modernist literature is outside the scope of this project, but two examples deserve mention here. First, I cite on several occasions David Chinitz' ("Dance Little Lady: Poets, Flappers and the Gendering of Jazz," in Modernism, Gender and Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach, ed. Lisa Rado, New York: Garland Publications, 1997, pgs.).
Borrowing from Andreas Huyssen's arguments about the way in which mass culture is both feminized and deployed as a trope in modernist literature, Chinitz' similarly explores jazz as a feminized trope in modernist poetry. Like Huyssen, Chinitz argues that jazz—and the feminine—comes to stand for the "other." Similarly, Kristin Henson's Beyond the Sound Barrier:The Jazz Controversy in Twentieth Century American Fiction explains how contemporary writers use jazz to symbolize the dangerous dissolution of class and race barriers. In addition, questions about "high" and 'low" culture in relation to early twentieth century music and dance practices are well traversed in first, Lawrence Levine's Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) which I cite extensively in the following chapter, and second, in musicologist Charles Hamm's terrific Putting Popular Music in Its Place (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). In particular, Hamm's chapter on "Modernist Narratives and Popular Music" argues that ragtime and jazz functioned in antithesis to the

Finally, and despite the historical significance of ragtime and jazz, studies on the controversy surrounding these musical forms are absent, for the most part, from contemporary popular music scholarship. In his chapter on "The Trouble with Music," Roy Shuker explains that,

> Particular genres of popular music have sparked controversy and opposition, both upon their emergence and sporadically since…Criticism has centered variously on the influence of such genres on youthful values, attitudes and behaviors through the music's perceived sexuality and sexism, nihilism and violence, obscenity, black magic and anti-Christian nature…While such episodes are a standard part of the history of popular music, music hall, jazz and other new forms of popular music were also all stigmatized in their day—rarely are their nature and cultural significance more fully teased out.[33]

Shuker's work, while useful for extrapolating on the above list of "troubles" associated with music, also ignores "jazz and other new musical forms." In fact, Shuker culls most of his examples of musical outrage from complaints about rock, heavy metal and techno. Given the lack of attention to ragtime or jazz in contemporary pop music studies, it is not surprising that the majority of work on music and moral panics also focuses on rock and its antecedents. Arguably, rock-centric scholarship removes the problems associated with "mass culture" from the historical context in which those debates occur. My research indicates that concerns about ragtime and jazz involved no single set of assumptions about the value of popular or mass art and their relationship to public culture, but rather a set of competing ideas that may, in fact, pointed more broadly to the diversity of

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"hierarchical and exclusionary" conception "modern" art. Here, Hamm clearly links the romantic veneration of autonomous art to liberal ideas about autonomy and individualism.

[33]In Understanding Popular Music, New York: Routledge, 2008, pg. 217.

progressive social thought. I describe these competing philosophies more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Chapter One: Progressivism

"Complaints about the decline of musical taste begin only a little later than mankind's twofold discovery, on the threshold of historical time, that music represents at once the immediate manifestation of impulse and the locus of its taming."

> Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression in Listening"[34]

Introduction

At the turn of the last century, a loose collection of intellectuals and activists sought to redirect the nation's moral, economic and social progress. The tumult created by industrialization, a newly mobile and diverse populace and, of course, novel forms of amusement, seemed to solicit intervention. The writings I consider in the following chapters were produced by progressive reformers or those otherwise swept up by the progressive zeitgeist. These include Evangelical Protestants concerned with moral order, women reformers interested in bettering urban conditions, new middle-class professionals invested in social engineering, and critics and musician who clearly understood music as "the manifestation of impulse and the locus of its taming." Below, I briefly trace historiography debates about progressivism in order to arrive at a working definition of the movement, and to offer preliminary arguments about why popular music became the object of progressive reforms.

Historiography Debates

Until the revisions of the 1970's, U.S. historians often defined progressivism as a coherent political movement that emerged in response to the economic depressions of late

[34] Reprinted in Essays on Music, ed. Richard Leppert, Berkeley: University of California Press, pg. 288.

1800's and ended with the country's contested participation in WWI.[35] Peter Filene's incendiary 1970 article, "An Obituary for the Progressive Movement" insisted to the contrary. Filene asserts that a disparate collection of political and social groups do not constitute a "movement," which by definition requires certain agreements and joint intentions. He cites, for instance, Roosevelt's "rebuke" of anti-corporate progressives who hoped to break apart industrial giants, as well as ideological splits over issues like labor and suffrage. Hence, the progressive "movement" defies both "programmatic and philosophical" categorization. Disagreements between and within coalitions demonstrate that progressivism never existed as such; historians merely deploy the label to make easy sense of a complicated and incoherent moment. Filene warns against those narrative delusions:

> The present state of historical understanding seems to deny the likelihood of a synthesis as convenient and neat as the 'progressive movement.' In their attempts to make sense of the past, however, historians will continue to search for conceptual order...Salvage efforts should be resolutely resisted. A diffuse progressive era may have occurred, but a progressive movement did not. [36]

Many of the stories Filene calls into question pivot off Richard Holfstader's arguments which imagine progressivism as a "status revolution." In his 1955 *The Age of Reform*, Holfstader argues that the progressive movement consisted of a "paranoid" but "optimistic" middle-class whose activism worked toward "defensive class-consciousness." These reformers responded to the unchecked powers of industry and to government corruption because those conditions threatened moral order and by

[35] Most notably, Robert Weibe's The Search for Order, 1877-1920, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967) and Richard Holfstader's The Progressive Movement, 1900-1915,(New Jersey: Prentiss Hall, 1963).
[36] Filene, "An Obituary for 'The Progressive Movement,'" American Quarterly, Vol. 22, No. 1, Spring, 1970, pgs. 33-34.

extension, middle-class power and status. Thus, according to Holfstader, progressive activities embodied "the complaint of the unorganized *against the consequences of organization*."[37] Reforms meant to fortify middle-class hegemony reacted to monopolies and other consolidations, rather than to the social changes of the early twentieth century. Holfstadter's arguments, then, define the progressive movement exclusively as a middle-class response to modern institutions like the state and the corporation. The debates that follow his publication consequently focus on whether those middle-classes acted in concert with new bureaucracies and systems of power, or in direct opposition. Robert Wiebe's germinal *The Search for Order* (1969), for instance, argues that "the heart of progressivism was the ambition of the new middle classes to fulfill its destiny through bureaucratic means."[38] Or, as historian Daniel Rodgers later puts it, "this was a movement of organization men caught up in dreams of social efficiency, systemization, and scientifically adjusted harmony."[39] Again, following Holfstadter's lead, pre-revisionist arguments often imagine the "movement" primarily in terms of its relationship to bureaucratic institutions.

Filene's forty year old obituary for this "movement" remains significant for a number of reasons. First, and despite his call to reject "salvage efforts," Filene's article only served to stimulate more nuanced research. The essay inaugurates what Rodgers describes as "the emergence of a pluralistic reading of progressive era politics."[40] The scope of the progressive "movement," then broadened to include conspicuously

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[37] Holfstader, The Age of Reform, New York: Knopf, pgf. 214.
[38] Reprinted as, "Progressivism Arrives" in Who Were the Progressives?, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, ed., (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1987, pg. 80).
[39] "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 10, No. 4, December, 1982, pg.118.
[40] Ibid., pg. 114.

overlooked groups with various objectives and extra-institutional strategies. For instance, research on women's organizations and reforms unhitched definitions of the "movement" from the efforts of "organization men" within or against institutions.[41] In so doing, revisionist scholarship also pointed to the ways in which cultural products and practices functioned as sites of hegemonic struggle or "defensive class-consciousness." Though temperance and anti-prostitution reforms appear in earlier accounts of progressive politics, the image of a "pluralistic" movement that emerges in later histories include reforms targeted at commercial amusements, popular arts and often, working-class social behaviors.[42] Many historians responded to Filene's article, then, by expanding the parameters of the "movement," rather than eliminating the concept altogether. Revisionist histories also suggest an extended timeline. Progressive reforms can only be said to end at the start of the war by ignoring the continued and often successful efforts of various women's organizations into the 1940's, and by ignoring The New Deal.[43]

More importantly, perhaps, *progressivism* obviously outlived organized and visible reform efforts. Literary scholar Chip Rhodes argues that if progressivism waned as a political force, it carried on as an intellectual tradition, albeit a less optimistic one.

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[41] Maureen Flanagan argues as recently as 2002 that "most works on Progressive Era politics and reform concentrate on men, ignoring women's roles, viewing them only as partners with their husbands or assigning them to the periphery of charity and church work." As cited in, Who Were the Progressives?, ed. Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002, pg. xiv). Her assertion seems generally true, with the notable exceptions of biographical work on individual women reformers, especially Jane Addams of the Hull House, and Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye's Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991). Also, see list below.

[42] See, for instance, Lawrence Levine's germinal "Highbrow/Lowbrow," Elizabeth I Perry's work on Dancehall reform such as "'The General Motherhood of the Commonwealth:' Dance Hall Reform in the Progressive Era,'" (*American Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 5, Winter, 1985, pp. 719-733) . More recent work includes Alison M. Parker's Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), and Derek Valiant's Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873-1935, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. I return to these histories and their significance to this project momentarily.

[43] Arthur Link actually makes a similar argument as early as 1959. See "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920s?" in *American Historical Review*, Vol, LXIV, July 1959, pgs. 833-851.

Borrowing a phrase from Raymond Williams, Rhodes suggests that progressivism existed as a "residual ideology" within both intellectual and aesthetic circles long after the First World War. Rhodes cautions, however, that intellectual progressivism differed in its conclusions from those of the "lost generation" authors so frequently associated with the era. Certainly, F. Scott Fitzgerald's self-indulgent ennui reads nothing like the pragmatic philosophies of John Dewey and Walter Lippmann. For this reason, Rhodes admonishes historians to avoid the "confusion and conflation of aesthetic and intellectual ideologies." Nonetheless, he argues that artists, intellectuals and reformers shared a set of ideas that fell "within the parameters of American liberal ideology." As Rhodes describes it, this ideology "is premised on (among other things) a pursuit of democratic consensus and a faith in as-yet-unfulfilled, better future, that men and women can make."[44] To state the obvious, American liberalism, and by extension various factions of progressivism, banked on the possibility of historical *progress.*

Thus, Filene's arguments also remain significant because they point to some of the common assumptions of progressivism and its "ideological residue." First, his dismissal of historiography's "search for conceptual order"—a play on Weibe's *The Search for Order*— underscores rather negates Weibe's argument. "Dreams of social efficiency" work much like the project of history in their attempts to systematize and make sense of an otherwise incoherent moment. This quest for order, in historical accounts or political reforms, illustrates some of western modernity's most pervasive philosophical underpinnings: the "master narrative" of historical progress evident in both the "movement" *and* accounts of its history. In fact, Filene protests historical narratives

[44] Chip Rhodes, Structures of the Jazz Age: Mass Culture, Progressive Education and Racial Disclosures in American Modernism, NewYork: Verso, 1998, pg. 18.

which mean to illustrate precisely the triumphs or failures of American progress. He finds historian Arthur Link especially guilty of defining "advanced progressivism" only as that which supports "a belief in popular democracy and opposition to economic privilege." [45] Filene complains that Link evaluates his own political and social moment by the degree to which it manifests that agenda. In other words, the scholars that Filene confronts are the intellectual inheritors of the very legacy he hopes to discredit.

If there was no one "movement," perhaps progressivism hinged on a shared "philosophical" program, however differently executed or actively applied. Holfstadter argues that, ""For all its internal differences and counter-currents, there were in progressivism certain widespread tendencies, certain general commitments of beliefs…"[46] Here, however, he offers only vague terms, "optimism" and "activism," to describe these "general commitments." Daniel Rodgers similarly provides an opaque definition, but one contingent on common ideology rather than shared objectives or methods. "If progressivism qualifies as an "ism" at all," he writes, "surely it is a set of shared ideas."[47] Filene points to a plurality of "movements" all of which emerged from a diffuse "progressive era." His "obituary" is important to this project because it insists on a diversity of progressive factions and philosophies. The death of the "movement" opens up the possibility of conceptualizing progressivism as a "shared set of ideas" that broadly apply to activists, intellectuals, moralists, and aesthetic critics, regardless of whether those groups or individuals acted in organized or consistent ways.

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[45] "An Obituary for 'The Progressive Movement,'" Pg. 25.
[46] The Progressive Movement, 1900-1915, New Jersey: Prentiss Hall, 1963, pg. 45.
[47] "In Search of Progressivism," pg.114.

Below, I offer a selective description of that philosophy in order to illustrate how progressive social thought informs the early century music panic. To this end, I borrow Derek Valliant's strategy which,

> …follows the theoretical trend that views such terms as 'progressive' and 'progressivism' as vexed yet indispensible markers for a complex set of ideals and actions whose intended and unintended consequences affected the lives of all Americans and the structure of democratic society.[48]

FAITH AND SCIENCE

Common to the otherwise diffuse factions of progressive reform was a certain vision of what modernity—as a manifestation of progress—ought to entail. American activists inherited much of this philosophical program from Europe's enlightenment thinkers and from the new capitalist bourgeoisie. Many hoped, even assumed, that America stood poised at the teleological end of European history.[49] A successful and specifically American modernity would manifest the social, economic and political triumph of the move from feudal economies and religious embattlement, to an ostensibly secular, democratic and capitalist nation-state. Modernity and *modern progress*, then, meant the "liberation" of humanity from the bonds of disease, poverty, religious tyranny and exploitation.

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[48] Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873-1935, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003, pg.4.

[49] As Chip Rhodes points out, America often imagined itself as the prophetic end of Hegelian trajectory (Structures of the Jazz Age: Mass Culture, Progressive Education, and Racial Disclosures in American Modernism, New York: Verso, 1998, pg. 19). Of course, the idea that America might actualize the ends of history and historical progress is linked to the doctrine of American exceptionalism and expressed in the concept of "manifest destiny." Perhaps Fredrick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis" ("The Significance of the Frontier in American History") presents the most acute example of that doctrine. It seems significant to this project that Turner delivered his "Frontier Thesis" first at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, where the ragtime composer Scott Joplin discovered the rudiments of a new syncopated sound the he later made into national craze –and in a way that many progressive reformers understood as an affront to progress (see Burton Perretti's *Jazz In American Culture*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997).

Chip Rhodes points out that by the end of WWI, progressives "no longer had the faith in 'America as prophecy' that often served as a recipe for inaction and compromise."[50] The devastating ends of the "Great War" and the ill-effects of industrialism suggested that America was no longer the inheritor of that history. If many progressives dismissed the idea of a "prophetic" America, however, they also embraced a new faith in American can-do-ism. In the wake of industrialization, "progress" seemed to require direct intervention. Historians Arthur Link and Richard McCormick suggest that the progressives' "ameliorative reforms reflected their faith in progress—in mankind's ability, through purposeful action, to improve the environment and the conditions of life." Link and McCormick explain that this "faith" in collective social agency set progressives apart from the previous century's reticent liberalism:

> The late nineteenth century dissidents had not lacked this faith, but their espousal of panaceas bespoke a deep pessimism: 'Unless this one great change is made, things will get worse.' Progressive reforms were grounded on a broader assumption. In particular, reforms could protect people hurt by industrialization and make the environment more humane.[51]

Social Darwinism had provided the middle-classes of the previous century with a "scientific" justification for laissez-faire economics. Some imagined labor exploitation, for instance, as a necessary and natural event in the "evolution" of U.S. economy and culture. Intellectual and business elites touted the philosophies of British sociologist Herbert Spencer, who argued, among other things, that governments "'should let the poor

[50] Structures of the Jazz Age, pg. 19.
[51] Progressivism, (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1983), pg. 21.

starve, rather than feed them.'"[52] The notion that free market economies operate much like organic systems clearly informed the anti-interventionist policies of the late-1800's. Spencer's misappropriation of Darwin, however, unraveled in the face of industrial hardships. Few could argue that child labor, rampant disease, or filthy tenements qualified as signs of evolutionary "progress." On the contrary, the conditions of industrialization seemed to demonstrate precisely the catastrophe of technological and industrial advances. In other words, science and capitalism left unchecked had failed to produce a more humane modernity. [53]

Thus, progressive attitudes often navigated between the *moral* deficit of laissez-faire economics and scientific rationalism, and a bourgeois faith in modern progress inherited from Europe. Many progressives retained the conviction that scientific principles, however disastrously applied by the likes of Spencer, could be employed to solve social problems. As Rhodes suggests, however, the progressive faith in science was transformed by the pragmatism of reformers like John Dewey and Walter Lippmann. "Science," Rhodes writes, "became increasingly important in the Progressive Era, but only as a tool with which better to retrieve the importance of and lessons from the complex of human experience."[54] Industrialism and its effects on "human experience" produced a host of new occupations that mean to arrest and redirect the momentum of modern development and that invoked science to these ends. The settlement house movement, for instance, produced the professional social worker; the data collection and

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[52] Ibid., pg. 16.
[53] However, factions of progressive reform continued to deploy questionable interpretations Darwin, especially those who adopted the rhetoric of Eugenics.The most notable example might be Margaret Sanger, who championed the birth control movement and founded Planned Parenthood.
[54] Structures of the Jazz Age, pg. 19.

evaluative methods of sociology, psychology and anthropology informed this new occupation. Hence, reform efforts often involved ethnographic forays through the urban industrial malaise—into factories, tenements, saloons and dancehalls—or otherwise used social-scientific research to sway public opinion.[55]

Progressive activists also created a style of writing that paired the investigative practices of social science with the vogue for literary realism. What Theodore Roosevelt once disparaged as "muckracking" in fact applied the visual logics of urban ethnography. "Muckraking" meant to *expose* the underbelly of industrial culture or to bring to light the social conditions otherwise unseen by a complacent middle-class. Like anthropology or other social sciences, this journalistic practice deployed the assumptions of a specifically modern episteme: truth through visual exposure, documentation and taxonomy. To this end, muckrakers strove for "objectivity;" many claimed to report in written language what the unadulterated photograph otherwise might capture.[56] Significant to my argument is that the *exposé* afforded predominantly white middle-class critics and reformers a vehicle through which to counter the pervasive influence of black and working-class *auditory* cultures. In this sense, the early century music panic can be understood in terms of competing *techne* (and their attendant episteme): the authority of the written word and the printing press set out against the intrusive sounds of a now reproducible music.[57] As I

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[55]Urban ethnographers considered not only labor conditions and living quarters, but also the types of recreation available to the working class city dweller. For instance, Maria Ward Lambin, a former settlement worker and women's club leader, produced a kind of taxonomy of dancehalls in New York City, and offered a series of recommendations about licensing and administration.

[56] C.C. Regier, The Era of the Muckrakers, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), pg. 57.

[57] New print and auditory media proliferated in tandem around the turn of the last century. While sound recording technologies created a wider audience for black and working-class music, technological advances in print and paper production made an increasingly literate public accessible to white music critics and bourgeois social reformers. Inexpensive wood pulp and photoengraving techniques produced glossy magazines like *The Ladies Home Journal* and *Collier'*s, both of which published numerous exposes on the

will argue in later chapters, the kinds of knowledge said to have been produced by ragtime and jazz—knowledge about the body, about sex, about various "unseen" forces— also disrupted a concept of "progress" that was hitched to the logics of sight and to scientific rationalism.

Link and McCormick point out, however, that progressive activism articulated "two bodies of belief and knowledge." On the one hand, scientific rationalism afforded progressives both method and authority. On the other, Evangelical Protestantism offered moral imperatives for intervention and reform. The religious revivals of the nineteenth century made elevation of the "poor and downtrodden" a Christian duty; adherents of the social gospel movement espoused civic engagement as an extension of "God's work." This contradiction—between scientific method and religious imperative—obscures the ideological cohesion of the diffuse progressive "movements." [58] Historians often describe this "set of shared ideas" as *moral rationalism*, which puts science and industry in the service of social and spiritual progress.[59] Moral rationalism certainly guided some of the Evangelical reformers who rallied against new music and dance cultures. The

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dangers of music and dance. Further, advertising revenue and changes in postal rates made newspapers and journals more affordable. By the end of nineteenth century over 1,600 daily newspapers circulated in the United States. See for instance, Lewis L. Gould, America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914. (Essex England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), pp. 28-29.

[58] Some argue that this Protestantism peculiar to America also provided one of the foundational philosophies of the new Republic. The "founding fathers," many of whom were Quakers and Deists, inscribed moral rationalism into the contractual documents of the nation. Thus, the rationalist contract—social and constitutional—provided a means by which to realize moral progress and America as prophecy (i.e. "In God We Trust").Industrialization and its attendant social injustices threw into question the viability of the social contract. In the U.S., "In God We Trust" clearly means, "God helps those who help themselves." Moreover, the foundational documents of the republic also point to the link between moral rationalism and national paternalism. See James H. Hutson's Religion and the Founding of the American Republic, (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1998).

[59] Rhodes argues that by the turn of the century, progressivism began to lose its faith in "transcendental authority." By this, he means its certainty that modern America was "predestined to arrive at some Hegelian ends of history," Structures of the Jazz Age, pg. 19. Clearly, certain progressive reforms retained another kind of faith in "transcendental authority."

Salvation Army, The Illinois Vigilance Society, and New England's Watch and Ward were among the numerous quasi-religious groups that used the rhetoric of social science in an effort to redirect moral order. As the names of these various organizations suggest, Protestant moralizing also invoked the logics of visual positivism (The Illinois Vigilance Society, Watch and Ward).[60] Secular reformers like Jane Addams similarly suggested that "moral reasoning" (and for Addams, this meant a specifically feminine mode of thought) would "elevate" the modern world, its science, industry and leisure. Addams argued that, rather than abolish dancehalls and cabarets or outlaw particular modes of music, activists might improve social conditions through a combination of moral vigilance and urban engineering.[61]

In response to the conditions of industrialization, many progressives adopted a philosophy that embraced, in whatever varied amounts suited them, scientific rationalism and a specifically Protestant morality. This combinatory faith responded to the failures of American liberalism exposed by the industrial revolution—that is, to the moral failures of a democracy founded on private property, individualism and a free-market economy. Addams and others argued that industrialism ought to be tempered with compassion for the poor as well as just political, economic and social policies. For most reformers, "progress" meant reconciling technological and industrial advances with social and spiritual needs.

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[60] These groups deployed the sorts of fire and brimstone arguments one might expect, but many bolstered moral outrage with scientific language. Some described the effects of music on the nervous system, for instance, or insisted that syncopation produced various sorts of psychic trauma. I detail a number of these arguments in the next chapter.

[61] Addams also composed a series of songs for social uplift and civic pride. As Derek Valliant explains in his Sounds of Reform, Addams and other reforms embraced a kind of musical populism—if not popular music—for its ability to elevate emotion and encourage community.

Culture and Progress

Hence, the nation's "moral uplift," and the recuperation of its historical momentum, required redressing not only grotesque poverty, but also the degraded products generated by industry. Many reform organizations worked to improve wages and labor conditions.[62] In addition, progressives, fought for the regulation and oversight of industrial output—from tainted foods and "quack" medicine to film, literature and music deemed unfit for public consumption. For instance, Upton Sinclair's famous expose of the meatpacking industry (*The Jungle*) galvanized public support for the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. Under the auspices of this newly formed federal agency, progressives vied for regulations of packaged foods and beverages, as well as toys, cosmetics and medicines. Censorship campaigns and other attempts to regulate cultural products sometimes were logical extensions of these industrial reforms. Tin Pan Alley's "assembly line" composition provoked outrage in part because it mimicked mechanical procedures and, for this reason, offered an "inferior" product. Rotten milk and "filthy" music, then, seemed to emerge from the same process; commercial art similarly favored expedient profit over "public good." In her *Purifying America*, historian Allison Parker explains why reform organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union made commercial culture the object of censorship campaigns. The WCTU hoped to arrest not only the proliferation of pornography, but popular film and literature otherwise "tainted." Parker asserts that many progressives understood the logics of industrialism as a significant threat to the moral progress of the nation because it clearly discouraged self-regulating practices. Censorship advocates, then, argued that the public required legal

[62] Domenica M. Barbuto, American Settlement Houses and Progressive Social Reform: An Encyclopedia of the American Settlement Movement, (Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press, 1999).

protections from debauched forms of entertainment much like those legislated for industrial foods.[63]

Complaints about mass culture, of course, also illustrate that popular art and music posed an affront to the "bourgeois cultivation" implicit in the project of progress. As Lawrence Levine suggests, "arbiters of culture" responded to the "looming chaos" of industrial modernity by adopting a disdain for mass art. The development of a fancy, aesthetic repertoire afforded the middle and upper-classes a buffer against cultural change. In his germinal *High brow/Lowbrow*, Levine writes,

> In an industrializing, urbanizing nation absorbing millions of new immigrants from alien cultures and experiencing an almost incomprehensible degree of structural change and spatial mobility, with anonymous institutions becoming ever larger and more central and with populations shifting from the countryside and small town to the city, from city to city and from one urban neighborhood to another, the sense of anarchic change, of looming chaos, of fragmentation, which seemed to imperil the very basis of traditional order, was not confined to a handful of aristocrats. Indeed, the elites had more allies than they were ever comfortable with, for to many of the new industrialists as well as members of the middle classes, following the lead of the arbiters of culture promised both relief from impending disorder and an avenue to cultural legitimacy.[64]

Here, Levine argues that during the mid and late 1800s, the middle-classes and "new industrialists" adopted "elite" interests. The enjoyment of opera, theater and symphonic music provided a way to distinguish oneself from the "filthy" working classes, and especially from new immigrants.[65] In the U.S., the adoption of "high" culture "assumed

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[63] Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pg. 19.
[64] Levine, Lawrence, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pg. 176.
[65] Ibid.

ethnic and racial dimensions." For instance, some arbiters of taste favored the more "cerebral" German opera over the visceral Italian variety. Levine reports that "most of the Guardians of Culture hailed [the German composer Richard] Wagner as a civilizing force."[66] Moreover, popular music operated as the foil against which these "civilized" sounds were measured. In the bourgeois imagination, ragtime and jazz invoked either "voodoo" rituals or conversely, the noise of industrial machinery; both signaled the pervasion of black and working-class cultures.

The veneration of the classical Western cannon allowed white middle and upper-class Americans to align themselves with the cultures of Northern Europe, rather than with new European immigrants from the East and South, or with African-American migrants. In this way, the middle-classes vied to embody more closely the *telos* of European history and culture, and by extension, to actualize a "prophetic progress" contingent on that association. Although these "arbiters of taste" did not necessarily engage in the kind of activism associated with the progressive "movement," they shared its disdain for industrial and commercial culture. Much like the emergence of "authentic" literature in the wake of printing press, the singular composer stood in contrast to mass produced and recorded music. [67] More importantly, perhaps, the residue of "bourgeoisie cultivation" remained with those reformers who attempted to "lift" the laboring masses out of cultural depravity.

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[66] Ibid., 220.

[67] Levine points out that the emergence of a "middle brow" culture also promised a certain degree of elevation. The popular march composer John Phillip Sousa, for instance, offered an acceptable, if not particularly sophisticated, form of popular entertainment. As a former Navy commander, Sousa embodied militant paternalism; his authoritative posture was said to sooth anxious audiences. In fact, Levine describes the conductor as "an apostle of order in an unstable universe." Highbrow/Lowbrow, pg. 177.

In some instances, "arbiters of taste" hoped to wrest popular arts from the clutches of the masses. White, middle-class musicians, for instance, frequently argued that ragtime and jazz might be "elevated" through better arrangement. By the mid-1920s, popular music journals began to augur the "coming of a great composer" capable of rescuing black and working-class music from its "lowly origins."[68] It seems that the ubiquity of new music, like that of the new immigrant, made its assimilation paramount to sustaining social order.[69] In other instances, reformers allocated "high" art as an anecdote to the products of the culture industry. Some suggested that well-appointed radio programming, because of its capacity to reach mass audiences, might suffice to "uplift" the entire nation. [70] Hence, women's clubs lobbied congress to demand "classical programming," and to eliminate hot jazz and vaudevillian inspired broadcasts. In 1927 the National Association of Women's Clubs even declared its annual objective: "to make good music popular and popular music good."[71]

In addition to art appreciation, "bourgeois cultivation" entailed certain postures and attitudes. In his *Steppin'Out: a Cultural History of Nightlife in Manhattan*, Lewis Erenberg explains that the nineteenth-century American bourgeoisie embraced an ethos of "personal restraint." Appropriate behavior meant "combining a moral fastidiousness and cultural refinement to discipline the will." "[H]ard work and elevated leisure

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[68] This is discussed at length in the following chapter.

[69] Several cultural historians suggest that aesthetic reforms and certain kinds of cultural guardianship qualify as instances of progressivism. The musicians and critics that I discuss in Chapter Two might be described as "aesthetic progressives," a term borrowed from Chip Rhodes' The Structures of the Jazz Age, and discussed further in Derek Valliant's Sounds of Reform.

[70] Some urban reformers also hoped to teach working class men and women proper etiquette through dance education campaigns. As I will illustrate in later chapters, dance and dancehall reformers conspired to set new steps to "classical" postures, and to regulate the kinds of music to which these steps could be performed.

[71] Cultural historian Susan Douglas reports that the National Association of Orchestra Directors "appointed a 'czar' to police hotels and nightclubs for 'the kind of jazz that tends to create indecent dancing.'"

pursuits," promised to produce an immanently reasonable and cultured nation.[72] Calvinism, of course, lent Americans this peculiar protestant affect: controlled behavior demonstrated the divine provenance of the individual and by extension offered evidence of a "prophetic" nation. As Max Weber famously argued, the moral exhibitionism of American Protestants—visible displays of modesty and industry—set the stage for the growth of industrial capitalism. Hard work and restraint were seen as signs of individual morality, and inauspicious wealth a family's moral success.[73]

Erenberg points out that the nineteenth-century businessman imagined the economy as a kind of "moral frontier" where: "individuals who practiced self-discipline…would be rewarded by mobility and ordered progress."[74] Bourgeois composure, then, was understood as a precondition for certain kinds of progress. Significantly, the private bourgeois household and its occupants stood at the center of this operation. The upper-class lady was expected to make her home a citadel of order, and to offer men in her care gentle moral guidance. Erenberg explains that "[w]omen had to be what men were not—refined, controlled, nurturing, self-effacing and stable—so as to provide the one non-competitive and nurturing environment." In this way, the bourgeois household offered reprieve from "the anarchic and hostile world of nineteenth century economic competition," even as it functioned to prepare men for exclusive participation

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[72] Lewis Erenberg, Steppin' Out: A History of Nightlife in Manhattan, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), pg. 5.

[73] Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons, (New York: Courier Dover Publications, 2003). Also, Link and McCormick point out that "the fundamental assumption of progressives was their deeply held conviction that men and women were creatures of their environment." Hence, poverty, crime and general debauchery did not demonstrate morally flawed individuals, rather a flawed environment. Nonetheless, the authors agree that "the belief that each person was responsible for his or her own well-being and salvation, and that poverty and failure were caused by weakness of character, was still strong in the late nineteenth century," (Progressivism, pg. 68).

[74] Steppin' Out, pg. 6.

in that public. The "angel of the house" also was said to inspire the willful discipline of the body that ultimately enabled productive labor. As Erenberg suggests "women taught men duty and the channeling of their passions through willpower," so that libidinal energies instead might be focused on worldly enterprise. In the Protestant imagination, sexual restraint made for industry and progress, whereas "passion…could distract men from success."[75]

Changing demographics and new leisure activities challenged the doctrine of "personal restraint," as well as the gender roles through which it functioned, and by extension, the kind of progress it seemed to promise. In his *Dancehall Days,* Randy McBee describes how the social practices of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe unsettled the behavioral expectations of protestant America. For instance, Southern Italians, accustomed to raucous and extended celebrations of Catholic Saints, seemed to drink, dance and flirt with abandon. The "courtship rituals" of these new immigrants often revolved around "tough" or close dancing, and frequently with anonymous partners. Worse, young women who worked long hours during the day also spent their evenings unescorted at dancehalls and nickelodeons, where, apparently, they cultivated unladylike habits. McBee writes that "[o]ne of the outstanding features of the dancehalls that morally enraged reformers was the rampant use of alcohol, especially among women."[76] Hence, the sorts of behaviors associated first with ragtime threatened the trajectory of progress established by the previous century's moral order. Progressives

[75] Ibid., pg.7.
[76] McBee, Randy D., Dance Hall Days: Intimacy and Leisure Among Working Class Immigrants in the United States, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pg. 112.

imagined popular music as a kind of co-conspirator that, like alcohol, worked to suspend social inhibitions; music lured women into dancehalls and then acted like an intoxicant.[77]

Again, for Protestant America, progress seemed to pivot on women's special moral capacities. In an effort to restore order, then, dance and dancehall reformers pushed middle-class virtues on working-class and immigrant women. Historian Kathy Peiss reports, however, that reformers and patrons struggled to agree on appropriate rules and activities. Peiss writes that,

> Cultural conflicts developed…as middle class ideals of womanhood met the flamboyant working-class version of the "New Woman." Opposing views of leisure, linked to differing models of what constituted appropriate female behavior, arose along class lines as well as within them. [78]

"Tough dancing" and other drunken promiscuities rattled ideas about feminine morality—again, a morality that had served as the lynchpin of progress for nineteenth century Protestants. Progressive women vied to "soften" the behaviors of the working girl. These activists also subscribed to a particular version of cultural feminism that banked on the presumption of women's inherent moral authority. Reformers believed that properly educated girls would adopt behaviors more "natural" to their sex. Thus, dance and dancehall reformers aimed to bolster feminine morality, in part because it justified their own participation in public and political life.[79] In her *Democracy and Social Ethics,* Jane Addams argued that democratic rejuvenation needed women's special capacity for

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[77] As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, critics complained that excessive syncopation encouraged nervous conditions, promiscuity, and even psychosis.

[78] Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the century New York, (Phildelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pg. 164.

[79] Elisabeth I. Perry makes this argument in her essay on dancehall reform, "The General Motherhood of the Commonwealth: Dane Hall Reform in the Progressive Era," (*American Quarterely*, vol. 37., no. 5, pgs. 719-733). I expand on these arguments in Chapter Three.

"moral reasoning." Social problems, she argued, "'demand upon the emotions as well as the intellect.'"[80] Women, then, were charged to care for public as well as private life. New leisure spaces afforded an opportunity to do just that: better social conditions by extending the maternal functions of the bourgeois household. To this end, dancehalls matrons offered unsolicited moral guidance, and working-class women were asked to emulate "lady-like" postures.[81]

Emulation or "modeling" behavior offered a means to Americanize new immigrants, and to wrest cultural authority from those who produced objectionable music and dance—i.e. black and working-class people. Of course, progressives vied for reforms that they believed would promote moral, economic and social growth. These efforts certainly meant to better the living and working conditions of those affected by industrial hardships. Link and McCormick point out, however, that the progressive fight for "social justice" often slipped into the practice of "social control." They write

> …justice meant that all Americans should have equal opportunity to live a decent life: that is, to be well-fed and housed, to be clean, and to be moral human beings. Vague as these terms were, most progressives felt they had a fairly clear idea of what a decent life meant, and that is where the element of social control entered their program. As middle-class Protestant Americans, they could not help but link injustice with deviations from what they considered to be right standards of behavior; nor could they prevent themselves from approving reforms that encouraged such behavior.[82]

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[80] As quoted in Jean Matthews, The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), . pg. 77.

[81] In addition to promoting "bourgeoisie cultivation," many reforms also aimed improve public safety, especially for women. The combination of poorly lit streets and leisure spaces, anonymous conditions, and "rampant" alcohol certainly had proved dangerous. Like censorship campaigns, then, dancehall clean-ups often followed the logics of other urban reforms. Most hoped to improve the conditions of life for working-class women

[82] Progressivism, pg. 84.

The influence of Eugenics on the era's social thought also offers a partial explanation for why the early century music panic focused almost exclusively on young white women. For progressives who embraced these ideas, the popularization of music from the social margins was not merely an affront to white cultural authority; the possibility of miscegenation threatened the nation with intellectual and moral decline. Because women were understood as genetic vehicles, the project of progress again seemed to pivot on the preservation of a feminine chastity. Moreover, eugenics clearly appealed to the progressive faith in science and its ability to solve social problems. Evidence of black "primitivism," culled from anthropological literature and other colonialist ventures, of course, only confirmed pre-existing prejudices.[83] Most progressives, however, believed that people were the products of their environments, rather than their genes. Hence, white progressive attitudes about race relations varied dramatically. For instance, African-American reformers aligned with white labor movements also were excluded from suffrage campaigns and, while white Southern activists worked to expand Jim Crow laws, settlement house workers in Harlem created the NAACP. Link and McCormick insist that "no group fared worse at the hands of their fellow Americans during the progressive era than blacks, who were effectively disenfranchised and segregated."[84]

Link and McCormick's assertion, though not inaccurate, fails to acknowledge black progressives who worked separately and in coalition with white activists. African-American reformers, however, were afforded far less social and political power than their white counterparts, and with a limited black press, neither their arguments nor their

[83] Ibid., pg. 96.
[84] Ibid.

efforts received much national attention.[85] Black progressives also differently approached the project of "bourgeois cultivation." Like white activists, African-American Evangelicals complained about the licentious atmosphere in ragtime and jazz clubs. Many also warned against the "rampant use of alcohol" and its ill-effects on young women. But, as Kathy Ogren points out in her *Jazz Revolution*, these "objections" had little to do with "characteristics of the music." Instead, Ogren argues, African-American "social welfare agencies considered themselves competitors with the saloon."[86] In other words, most black progressives were concerned about the social problems and the spaces associated with ragtime and jazz, rather than the music itself. Activists also admonished new migrants and "jazzers" for confirming racist assumptions; "debauched" behaviors risked retributive violence from the white community. For many black progressives, then, "bourgeois cultivation" was a means to promote racial "uplift." However, African-American reformers, artists and critics were unlikely to invest in the recuperation of a "progress" from which they always had been excluded.

Conclusion

For progressive reformers, the aesthetics of new music and its attendant social practices reflected the degenerate social and economic conditions of industrial modernity. Ragtime and jazz manifest and reproduced the logics of industrialism; to some critics, syncopation even mimicked the rhythms of machinery. In this way, new music signaled, through its associations and social practices, the end of America as "prophecy." Ragtime

[85] See, for instance, Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, eds.,Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era, (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1991).
[86] The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pg. 114.

and jazz were considered, if not the cause, then the aesthetic products of a profound historical failure. Anxiety about cultural "decline," however, mainly preoccupied the white middle-classes. American liberalism—by way of the social contract—*always had* excluded persons of color and the working-classes (and women), and so too did the concept of "progress" contingent on its success. As the historical benefactors of that contract, white middle-class progressives necessarily worried about its failures, and about the historical trajectories that it originally meant to secure.

The following chapters explore the ways in which music and dance were said to pose an affront to the project of progress. Again, the writings I consider were produced by progressive reformers or those otherwise swept up by the progressive *zeitgeist*. These include Evangelical Protestants, women's club activists, middle-class professionals, critics and musicians. Each differently imagined the "problem" of popular music, but most articulate some of the philosophies described above. In the next chapter, "Music, Paternalism and Progress," I explore complaints about musical sounds itself, and specifically how music was said to disrupt the social and spatial divisions on which Protestant America once had staked its claim to progress.

Chapter Two: Music, Paternalism and Progress

Introduction

"For the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling the most fundamental political and social conventions."[87]

–Plato, *Republic*

In 1919, *The New York Times* bothered to report that President Wilson had shushed a jazz band for interrupting his sleep several nights in a row. The headline reads: "NOISY JAZZ MUSIC STILLED—its Echoes Disturbing to the President's Sleep—his mind on today's labor conference."[88] Evidently, sounds from the roof garden of a nearby hotel had reverberated against the White house walls, rattling the president's half-conscious mind from issues of state.

The *Times* story pronounces common concerns about the ways in which early century pop music seemed to cross into private spaces (the White house, the unconscious), disrupt domestic functions, and as Plato writes, unsettle "the most fundamental political and social conventions."

The peculiar status of sound in western philosophical discourse helps to explain why music often has been the source of moral and political outrage. Unlike other sensory experiences, sound can be felt in the muscles, bones and nervous system. Exterior sounds in this way confound the boundaries of the body and the assumption of a discrete subject that anchors western metaphysics.[89] Musicologist John Shepherd argues that "sound (and

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[87] As cited in Music in the Western World: A History in Documents, eds. Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin (New York: Schirmer, 1984), pg. 8.
[88] Anonymous, "President Gains Strength," in *Special to The New York Times*, October 6th, 1919, pg. 1.
[89] In his critique of "phonologocentrism," Derrida argues that in order to privilege speech over writing philosophy must "forget the ear," the social organ that filters the exterior, and hence the "other."

therefore music as text) is the only major channel of communication that actively vibrates inside the body..." Shepherd further claims that those "vibrations" reveal that only a thin membrane separates individual bodies from "the body social." He writes that, "unlike vision, which is the medium of division and control…sound serves to remind people of their tangible relationship to the natural and social worlds."[90] Music, then, confronts the listener with his or her concrete connection to the exterior—to material conditions and to the "other."

Because it operates directly on muscles, organs and tissues, "unsanctioned" sound menaces specific kinds of authority. In her essay "Same as It Ever Was," musicologist Susan McClary recounts a history of music panics in the west that link the seduction of sound to the defiance of paternal powers. Again, the presumptions of western metaphysics appear to make music especially culpable for social disruptions. As McClary argues "[i]n a culture rigidly structured in terms of a mind-body split music's appeal to the body predisposes it to be assigned to the feminine side of the axis." Cultures seeped in Judeo-Christian ideologies associate the feminine body with moral lapse. Thus, McClary argues that historical complaints about the dangers of "unsanctioned music" illustrate patriarchal anxieties about keeping women in place. Historically, and for nearly every critic of new music, she writes "nothing less is at stake than masculinity itself and,

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"Forgetting" the "ear-as-organ" sustains the illusion of a bound subject in that it separates cognition from sensate experience, mind from body, interior from exterior, and self from "other." "Phonologocentrism" privileges a notion of subjectivity *contingent* on those divisions. By "forgetting the ear," western metaphysics exalts speech as the organic, internal and unmediated product of a discrete self. The consequence is a philosophical system that understands the subject as distinct, fixed, and impenetrable (and implicitly masculine). "Phonologocentrism" also encourages a type of listening suspicious of sounds not produced from within, such as music, "other" voices, or "hearsay. This may be why recording technology renders our interior voices alien, exterior and other. See Jacques Derrida, Between the Blinds, ed. Peggy Kamuf . Between the Blinds: A Derrida Reader, ed., Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pg. 27.

[90] Music as Social Text, (London: Polity Press, 1986), pg. 179.

by extension, the authority of church, state and patriarchy."[91] McClary asserts that "unsanctioned" music threatens to "emasculate" because it invites listeners to transgress both social and physical constraints; music that invites the body to move appears to suspend paternal (superegoic) commands that modify behavior and otherwise hold bodies in literal and symbolic place.

Pop theorist Simon Frith claims that music presents "utopian possibilities" precisely for its capacity to suspend inhibitions and cross social barriers. After the advent of written notation systems and, later, sound recording technologies, music gained an even greater ability to travel across borders—and further trouble the kinds of authority contingent on rigid social divisions. Frith argues that because it may pass through "fences and walls and oceans" as well as "classes, races and nations," music gestures toward the possibility of more egalitarian social arrangements. "What music does" Frith writes, "is put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social forces."[92] In other words, by crossing barriers—corporeal, geographic and symbolic—music *potentially* disrupts the ordered hierarchies of social and political life.[93]

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[91] "Same as it Ever Was: Youth Culture and Music," in Microphone Fiends: Youth Culture and Youth Music, eds. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose, (New York: Routledge, 1994), pg. 31.

[92] Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pg. 276.

[93] Music theorists Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson argue that Western metaphysical discourse for this reason seeks to "suppress and at best erase the materiality of music." By "materiality," they mean music's appeal to the ear and to the body. They explain that western music critics often have exalted the *written* composition which can be "heard" only in the mind. Despite Plato's complaint that writing corrupts, music inscribed is privileged over music sounded. Reading as visual uptake preserves the interiority of the subject and his intellectual remove, whereas sound stages a confrontation with "otherness," and with the immediacy of the body. The suppression of materiality also points to the more general elision of the *feminine* within western philosophical traditions. Gilbert and Pearson invoke Luce Irigary's argument that western philosophy associates form and matter (as opposed to abstraction or "higher content") with the maternal body and its dangerously ambiguous boundaries. Irigary contends that the "ear-as-organ" is denigrated precisely for its association with that indistinct materiality. Thus sound as a sensory perception and music as a social experience evoke the maternal body and its attendant threat to the sovereign ego.

As I suggest in the following sections, ragtime and jazz clearly traversed the borders between public and private cultures in a way that unsettled paternal authority *and* a notion of progress initially tied to the gendered division of space. Moreover, the widespread popularization of African-American musical forms fractured the cultural monopolies of the white bourgeoisie and threw into relief anxious questions about the social and genetic origins of the nation. In other words, ragtime and jazz appeared to dismantle some of the partitions on which the American middle-class often staked its claims to progress. As I suggested in the previous chapter, Protestant America in particular hitched progress to the orderly division of public and private spheres. Here, I consider discourse about the ways in which new music seemed to intrude on the bourgeois household. Ragtime, for instance, first made its entry on player pianos and sheet music (The Piano). Jazz, in contrast, was said to play the pied piper, enticing young women from their domestic posts (Music and Maternity). Next I consider progressive writings that decry the effects of "savage" music in relation to America's status as a post-colonial nation (The Specter of the "Savage"). Finally, I suggest that debates about the aesthetic origins of ragtime and jazz reflect specifically paternal anxieties about the origins and future of America (Music and Paternity).

(Discographies: Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound, New York: Routledge, 1999, pgs. 83-100).

The Piano

In 1901, *The Delaware County Times* published this personal ad:

> A bachelor of forty, an expatriate from Manhattan by reason of incompatibility of climate, desires the acquaintance of a lady of cultivated musical taste (pianist) who is unencumbered and in the enjoyment of full autonomy. To prevent any misunderstanding of my conception of the term "musical," I would say that Ethiopian syncopation is my aversion and So-So's marches are a weariness. Address, in confidence, R. Box 34, Times office.[94]

Here, "bachelor of forty" seeks an unmarried woman whose musical training demonstrates gentility. "Cultivated taste," he notes in parenthesis, will be evident in her performance at the piano. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries musical practice afforded a girl (and her father's piano) a certain social status. The young woman's skills as a pianist were tied in this way to her sexual value; her accomplishment at the instrument, like a performance dowry, transferred that status from father to husband.[95] "Bachelor of forty," then, wants a wife who meets the class and gender expectations of a recently past century, not merely a companion with whom to share his musical interests.

Music theorist Richard Leppert notes that in addition to conferring status, the piano kept middle-class housewives occupied and at home. "Trivial" domestic pursuits, from the cross stitch to the sonata, made innocuous use of a lady's time. Leppert writes,

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[94] Reprinted in Gates, W.F., "Ethiopian Syncopation—the Decline of Ragtime," *The Musician*, October, 1902, pg. 606.

[95] See Mary Burgan, in "Heroines at the Piano, Women and Music in 19th Century Fiction," *Victorian Studies*, August, 1986, vol.30 issue 1, pg. 51, 26p.

> The domestic production, hence consumption, of music—specifically if problematically sanctioned for upper-class girls and women—was placed among the so-called 'accomplishments' that made females fit for the marriage market and thereafter fit reflections of their husbands' station. The function of the accomplishments' within the domestic economy was principally one of containment…Leisured women had a lot of time on their hands and men must see to it that their time was spent appropriately.[96]

Thus the parlor piano was put to the task of securing women's domestic quarantine. Domestic music production also worked to preserve masculine privileges and entitlements—exclusive access to women and dominion over the public sphere. As Leppert suggests, "music helped produce an ideologically correct species of woman; in the eyes of men music accordingly contributed to social stability by keeping women in the place that men had assigned them."[97] On the precipice of the twentieth century, the piano remained tied to the social ideologies of the bourgeoisie. Even President Calvin Coolidge once praised the instrument's function as the keeper of domestic and moral order. "'We cannot imagine'" he told a group of reporters, "'a model home without the family bible on the table and the family piano in the corner.'"[98]

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[96] Leppert, "Social Order and the Domestic Consumption of Music: the politics of sound in the policing of gender construction in eighteenth century England," in The Sight of Sound: Representation and the History of the Body. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.pg. 548.

[97] Women's musical training also provoked a great deal of anxiety. A wife who performed well might outshine her husband or otherwise garner more attention than befit a lady. Critics of the day accordingly insisted that a woman's piano skills and her choice of music demonstrate no more than a "frivolous" interest in performance—certainly nothing that might suggest worldly ambitions. The toy-like pianoforte may have seemed especially attune to that purpose. A well-behaved daughter performed simple, parlor-crowd pleasers, never pieces that might showcase her talents. See, Richard Leppert's "Social Order and the Domestic Consumption of Music: the politics of sound in the policing of gender construction in eighteenth century England," in Music and Gender Politics in England, pg. 518-519.

[98] As cited in LeRoy Ashby, With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture Since 1830, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), pg. 166.

Changes in manufacturing procedures during the early nineteenth century made the piano a pricey but attainable item for the middle-class household. Music historian John Edward Hasse explains that the piano "was a symbol of respectability—[it signaled] the arrival of the middle-class."[99] In this way, the piano participated in the project of "bourgeois cultivation" by which the middle and upper classes demonstrated a "refinement" that meant to place America at the teleological end of European progress. Production processes that lead to an increase in the sale of domestic pianos, however, also introduced the instrument to a variety of public spaces. By the mid-nineteenth century, the piano became the focal point of entertainment in theaters and churches as well as in saloons and brothels. While the middle and upper-classes continued to purchase the instrument for private, domestic use, the proliferation of public pianos gave rise to virtuoso performers from less privileged groups. In other words, the piano's new accessibility, despite its status as a symbol of middle-class wealth, invited musical innovations from the social margins. As Hasse explains, it was the piano that made ragtime (and later jazz) syncopation possible. Nascent forms of the music were likely produced on banjoes, but the piano allowed for "two hands (up to ten fingers) of melody, harmony and rhythm."[100] Keys, rather than strings, let the left and right hand play distinct from one another; ragtime performers astonished early century audiences with their remarkable ambidexterity. Ultimately, the creation and popularization of ragtime—both results of the piano's new ubiquity—irrevocably altered the status of the instrument and its symbolic function in the white middle-class household.

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[99] Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music, ed. John Edward Hasse, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), pg. 11.
[100] Ibid., pg. 13.

White music critics of the day often claimed that ragtime debuted at the Columbian Exhibition of the World's fair in Chicago, in 1893.[101] Hasse suggests, however, that ragtime likely existed ten to twenty years before it was known to white audiences. The *St. Louis Dispatch*, in fact, credited ragtime syncopation to a long-dead and unknown local woman (!), who the paper nonetheless describes: "'glossy black as her forbears of the Dark Continent, tall and stalwart, and rich voiced.'"[102] Whatever the origin, the social and symbolic spaces associated with ragtime immediately tainted its reputation. Often, critics argued that "excessive syncopation" arrived directly from Africa, and found its worst expression in saloons and brothels. Ragtime purportedly aimed to excite whorehouse patrons—in hope that they might spend more money.[103]

In fact, ragtime music *was* played in predominantly African American saloons and brothels. Progressive reform efforts that shut down red light districts sent pianists like Jelly Roll Morton[104] north to Chicago, St. Louis, and other cities.[105] Travelling piano

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[101] In attendance, reputedly, were the notorious Jelly Roll Morton and then eighteen year old Scott Joplin. Raised in a brothel in New Orleans, Ferdinand Morton learned to play piano from the house musician. His success as a jazz pianist certainly encouraged the assumption that jazz music originated in the nation's red light districts. Scott Joplin became, arguably, the world's most renowned ragtime composer.

[102] As cited in Hasse, pg.8.

[103] These myths, of course, link African musical traditions to the purportedly insatiable and "savage" sexuality of black men (though white men frequently visited brothels). That fear of "savage" masculinity clearly manifests in "white slave trade" films and other popular representations of the dangers of miscegenation that proliferated at the turn of the last century. I detail that panic further in following chapters and sections.

[104] It seems worth mentioning that Jelly Roll Morton was a creole who turned up his nose at "black negroes." See Gunter Schuller's Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development, (New York: Oxford University Press), pg. 137.

[105] The ragtime pianists certainly travelled prior to the closure of the red light districts. Reform efforts, however, likely exacerbated the trend. Many historians argue that the closing of the red light districts allowed jazz to develop from ragtime although Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janice assert in They all Played Ragtime, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1950, pg. 269) that the two musics developed separately. I think, however, that historian Gunther Schuller offers the most convincing argument: "In due time ragtime piano became instrumentalized and its even-note, slightly stiff syncopations and unimprovised, formalized patterns gradually loosened up and were absorbed into the main current of jazz. (Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development, New York: Oxford University Press, pg. 67).

"professors,"[106] performed in a variety of venues and in this way exposed ragtime to wider audiences. These virtuoso performers, most of whom played by ear, also solicited the attentions of music publishers, as well as white musicians interested in copying their techniques. By most accounts, the first copyrighted sheet music described as "ragtime" was a song titled "All Coons Look Alike to Me." The tune accompanied black-face performances and represented a genre of minstrelsy known as "coon poetry" or "coon songs." Needless to say, African-American piano professors did not produce these materials, which critics of the day often conflated with other styles. Pop historian Terry Waldo, however, speculates that ragtime may have developed in part to parody the minstrel show. He suggests that ragtime's exaggerations sent-up the phobic caricatures common to black-face performance.[107]

Ragtime as a technique certainly banked on playful antagonisms: melodies and rhythms bantered on separate hands and, of course, one hand "teased" the other. [108] Ragtime also mocked the middle-class respectability that the piano once signified. As Ashby puts it "For a time, 'ragging' became a way to protest subtly against genteel music. Even ragtime's energetic, percussive-like use of the piano countered the staid and stiff parlor tradition of the middle-class."[109] Moreover, to "rag time" meant to "tear time apart." In the context of western modernity, music made of "ragged time" mocked the industrial clock and the Fordist machinery that otherwise ordered the rhythms of

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[106] This is sometimes spelled "perfessors." "Piano Professor" cleverly insists that performance of music (as opposed to its abstract composition) constitutes genuine knowledge worthy of title.
[107] Terry Waldo, This is Ragtime, New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976, pg. 36.
[108] Ann Douglas makes this observation: "'Playing ragtime—the right hand was teasing the left," (As cited in Ashby, With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture Since 1830, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), pg. 166.
[109] Ashby, pg. 166.

everyday life.[110] Terry Waldo suggests that ragtime "placed the old man made folk music in a mechanized context."[111] In this way, the music represented at its inception a subversive response to the conditions of industrial progress, as a well as a rejection of bourgeois domesticity and its attendant social values.

By razing the red light districts, progressive reformers actually helped to usher disruptive music into the middle-class household. Hasse points out that the publication of ragtime sheet music peaked with the sale of pianos, around 1912. More significantly, perhaps, sheet music sold primarily to white middle-class women, who continued to perform on domestic pianos. Many of the ragtime compositions proved difficult for amateur pianists and, eventually, the player piano replaced the bourgeois housewife.[112] Acoustically superior to the early gramophone, piano rolls dazzled with extra octaves and tricks beyond the capacity of human hands.

In any case, sheet music and piano rolls made popular ragtime the new soundtrack of the bourgeois parlor. This, again, significantly altered both the status of the piano and the ideological function of domestic music production; sounds associated with brothels symbolically intruded on the moral order of the private sphere. That intrusion in turn troubled a "progress" contingent on the sanctity of the middle-class household. Historian Lewis Erenberg claims that during the nineteenth century, the brothel helped to secure bourgeois domesticity by operating as an antithetical space where the untoward desires

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[110] Joel Dinerstein makes this argument about jazz in Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology and African American Culture Between the Wars, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 200)3.
[111] Terry Waldo, This is Ragtime, New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976, pg. 36.
[112] Mary Burgan, in "Heroines at the Piano, Women and Music in 19th Century Fiction," *Victorian Studies*, August, 1986, vol.30 issue 1, pg. 51, 26p.

absent from the ideal home might be expressed. (The prostitute, of course, was configured as the moral foil of the bourgeois lady.) Erenberg explains,

> Every major metropolitan area and even some good sized towns had their segregated red light districts. Here men found relief from the home and at the same time retained a commitment to dominant social values. Segregated vice districts separated vice from the respectable woman and the respectable home from vice.[113]

According to Erenberg, the "respectable" woman's position as moral anchor also enabled men to work productively outside the home.[114] Hence, the introduction of "brothel" music to the middle-class household symbolically unsettled the socio-spatial hierarchies to which progress was hitched.

In a 1902 article for *The Musician*, popular critic W.F. Gates cites "Bachelor of Forty's" personal ad (above) in order to demonstrate "how prevalent the perverted taste was when a man had to advertise for a wife that was not steeped in ragtime." "Ethiopian Syncopation," Gates argues, constitutes the abuse of an otherwise legitimate musical idiom. Further, he suggests that mass production of sheet music made disruptive musical abuses all the more pervasive. Gates describes this process in a way that clearly articulates his concern about music's ability to disrupt geographic and social boundaries:

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[113] Lewis Erenberg, Steppin Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930, London, Greenwood Press, pg. 21.
[114] Ibid, pg. 18.

> A hopper is fitted onto the press and into it are poured jerky note groups by the million, 'coon poetry' by the ream, colored inks by the ton, and out of the other end of the press comes a flood of 'ragtime' abominations that sweep over the country, not leaving untouched even the isolated hamlet on the slopes of the remote Sierras, a hundred miles from the nearest railway. On the grand piano surroundings in the New York drawing room, on the cheap little organ in the cottage on the western plains, through all grades of society, culture and financial standing, the Ethiopian syncopations have swept in a tide that is only now beginning to pull on the taste of an over tickled public palate.[115]

Ragtime's social and domestic invasion certainly presaged the post-war jazz panic. In her *Jazz Revolution,* for instance, Kathy Ogren points to a particularly telling image published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1926. The photo depicts a set of solid-looking parlor furniture, beneath which Ogren writes: "This advertisement…*for jazz proof home furnishings* captures well the sense of jazz as an invading social force [my emphasis]."[116] In the photo, heavy chairs and tables indeed look impervious to sound. More significantly, perhaps, the image shows a dining room and a parlor, spaces obviously associated with the duties of the bourgeois housewife. Not only did critics imagine jazz as "an invading social force," they decried its potential to disrupt the ideological functions of middle-class domesticity.

The popularization of "Ethiopian syncopation" coincided with white women's new public visibility. In addition to complaints about black and working class music, the early century presses were rife with admonishments for the "New Woman," the suffragist, and the flapper. As Elisabeth Perry points out in her….., social conservatives

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[115] "Ethiopian Syncopation—The Decline of Ragtime," *The Musician*, October, 1902 (JIP pg. 68).
[116] The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1989, pg. 110.

warned that women who participated in public or political culture abdicated their maternal duties and in this way, undermined the civilizing (and progress supporting) functions of the bourgeois household. As I illustrate below, Jazz was said to *lure* white women from their homes and into the dancehalls and cabarets. Critics often conflated the effects of the suffrage movement with those of jazz music.[117]

Music and Maternity

Jazz seemed to unsettle the already teetering institution of bourgeois motherhood for its ability to "lure" girls from the home and into the lascivious spaces of the dancehall, and to circumvent the paternal commands that otherwise kept bodies in place. In 1921— the same year that women's suffrage took effect—*The Chicago Daily Tribune* ran this headline: FALL OF 1,000 GIRLS CHARGED TO JAZZ MUSIC. The article cites excerpts of a report published by Dr. Phillip Yarrow, "superintendent" of the Illinois Vigilance Society:

> From the dance palaces of Chicago, from the smaller halls in surrounding cities, and from local dance rooms in country towns, come girls whose entrance into the life of moral abnormality was accompanied by the pathological, nerve irritating, sex exciting music of a jazz orchestra.[118]

Like many early century reform organizations, the Vigilance Society stood on watch for a variety of social ills. Yarrow, also a Methodist reverend, patrolled the state for indecent literature, pornographic images and assorted urban vice. Mainly, Yarrow seems to have dedicated himself to the moral uplift of American youth and, to that end, the regulation of

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[117] Elisabeth I. Perry, "'The General Motherhood of the Common Wealth:' Dance Hall Reform in the Progressive Era," *American Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 5, Winter, 1985, pg. 724.
[118] "Fall of 1,000 Girls Charged to Jazz Music," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 19th, 1921, pg. 3.

sexual behavior. [119] In his "Preliminary Report on Immorality," Yarrow culls evidence from the "unfortunate" experiences of young women brought before the city's court system. He argues that a variety of feminine crimes—shoplifting, but especially prostitution—seem to result from extended exposure to "pathological, nerve irritating," dance music. In Chicago's dance halls and cabarets, he writes "amid the distracting notes of the saxophone and the weird beat of the tom-tom was witnessed conduct not hitherto seen outside the old red-light district." [120]

If the brothel functioned in antithesis to the nineteenth century bourgeois household, then the return of "red-light" music as middle-class pop culture certainly announced the end of the Victorian era's socio-spatial divisions. Yarrow's "Report on Immorality" demonstrates that the popularization of jazz seemed to collapse some of the distinctions between legitimate middle-class amusements and those of "the old-red light district." Moreover, new music and dance ushered white, middle-class women into spaces otherwise reserved for the working-classes, for African-Americans, and for white men. In response, *The Chicago Tribune* and other city papers published numerous such articles, written by or about progressive reformers—often, members of the social gospel—detailing the spectacular liberties of jazz-age women. In a sermon cited by the *New York Times*, Francis Clark of the Christian Endeavor Society called jazz and its invitation to dance "'an offense against womanly purity, the very fountainhead of our family and civil

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[119] During the war years, his Vigilance Society published and circulated a series of pamphlets titled "Social Hygiene for the Young Man." Aimed at the wayward soldier, these offered instructions, in somewhat oblique language, on how to avoid contracting venereal diseases while acting in service to the nation. Yarrow also sat on Chicago's famous "Committee of Fourteen," another reform group committed to purging the city of sex workers. Thus, in part because of its historical associations with the brothel, jazz often was subject to similar social hygiene efforts.

[120] "Fall of 1,000 Girls Charged to Jazz Music," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 19th, 1921, pg. 3.

life.'"[121] Again, for many, the lure of music seemed to interrupt a progress contingent on women's domestic containment.

In the mid 1920's, *The Ladies Home Journal* launched a rigorous campaign against the threat of jazz that well illustrates the ways in which new music seemed to unsettled the structures of the middle-class family. In 1927, for instance, *The Journal* published an editorial exposé written by New York City's Chief Magistrate, Judge William McAdoo. In his article, "The Frightful Pace of Modern Jazz," McAdoo recounts "case after case" in which exposure to the "syncopated riot" in the dance halls and the city streets made delinquents of girls from otherwise "superior homes." The court system's sudden preponderance of respectable women, in fact, testified to the dissolution of familial authority; his stories from the bench clearly mean to illustrate that the jazz dance hall had eclipsed the bourgeois parlor as the space of gender socialization. "[Judge McAdoo] is especially concerned about girls who go wrong," the *Journal* claims, "for he declares that in the age of jazz, with dance halls luring from the home, with 'petting' the vogue, the present generation is in far greater danger than their mothers or grandmothers ever were." [122] McAdoo's essay begins, however, with a spectacular story of a mother's murder. He writes,

> When newspapers reported under sensational headlines that a young girl—sixteen years of age, pretty and physically alluring—had killed her own mother in a Far Western city because her mother had opposed her staying out late at night in cabarets and dance halls, a wave of shocked horror swept over the country.[123]

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[121] As cited in Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997, pg. 70.
[122] McAdoo, William, "The Frightful Pace of Modern Jazz," *The Ladies Home Journal*, Vol. 44 (October, 1927) pg.22.
[123] Ibid.

This jazz matricide literalizes the common complaint that music posed a threat to the institution of bourgeois motherhood. Ultimately, McAdoo divulges that the "slatternly" mother in fact had "overindulged" her flapper daughter. She encouraged the child's vanity,[124] neglected religious training, and failed to discipline. McAdoo insists that in the age of "science" and social ennui—in the absence of religious and moral conviction—parents might take better care not to "spare the rod."[125] Indeed, by shirking her maternal duties, particularly as a moral guide, mother precipitates her own murder.

Clearly, the "jazzing" daughter disrupts the gendered division of spheres on which *paternal* authority banks as well; the sounds of jazz and the "lure" of the dancehall here tempt girls to defy the social and legal prohibitions of paternalist institutions (father, church and state). McAdoo's arguments, then, illustrate how jazz music and dance seemed to unsettle a social order contingent on women's domestic containment. They also demonstrate the common complaint that women's new political *liberties* lead girls invariably towards jazzed-up *libertinage*. In fact, he explicitly argues that women's recent social and political gains may adversely affect maternal commitments and hence allow for precisely the kinds of behaviors associated with the dance halls. At first he hedges: "The new freedom gained by women has with many of the young been perverted to license." Here, McAdoo merely suggests that the jazz daughter exploits otherwise legitimate claims to public life, for which the previous generation's morality had

[124] In addition to jazz, critics often blamed feminine vanity for debauched behaviors. Young women's overindulgence in cosmetics and clothing often was said to illustrate, on the one hand, the lure of the advertisement, and on the other, the dismissal of Protestant "modesty" tied to the general unsettling of the previous century's social and moral codes.

[125] Spare the rod" certainly points as well to the absence of paternal intervention; without the threat of father's disciplinary action, McAdoo argues, mother has little clout.

vouched. Later, however, he expands his complaints to include the rhetoric of gender equality. For instance, he writes that "[w]e hear young girls maintaining, in their insistence on equal rights, that there is nothing a male can do which they cannot. Many carry this into practice, in overdrinking, loose behavior and general wild oats." "Equal rights," then, afford *too much liberty* because "equality" invites young women to mimic masculinity.

Participation in public culture gives girls an excuse to shirk gender roles and further undermine Victorian presumptions about feminine morality. At the end of his essay, McAdoo describes the dangers of the jazz lifestyle with blunt clarity:

> What must be considered in this claim of equal rights…is that women are the potential mothers of children—the vehicle through which future generations are perpetuated. Any widespread lowering of standards…among young women, any deterioration of character, means a poisoning of the future race life at its source.[126]

For McAdoo, social libertinage and political liberty (which he conflates) threatens the *evolution* of the race. He suggests that lax maternal commitments make for wayward daughters; the feral girl in turn "poisons" future offspring. Hence, the freedom that leads to "jazzing," which then produces libertine impulses, destroys not one mother, but future mothers, perhaps motherhood itself. By invoking the "race" and its sustenance, McAdoo also links two distinct social toxins described in his article—African-American music and the women's movement—the latter of which rendered girls more susceptible to the former. The judge implies, moreover, that "equality," which here means freedom of

[126] McAdoo, William, "The Frightful Pace of Modern Jazz," *The Ladies Home Journal*, Vol. 44, October, 1927, pg. 23.

movement, in fact invites the possibility of *miscegenation*: "the poisoning of the future race at its life source."

As further evidence, McAdoo recalls the arrest of four, attractive underage blonde girls found at a dance hall in the company of "dusky companions"—Asian and Latino men. The young men's preference for fair-haired girls was, according to the judge, "the only thing they had in common with gentlemen."[127] Apparently, the urban public, what McAdoo describes as the "human jungle," is a space of lawless heterogeneity and a fecund setting for taboo sexual encounters. In addition to the threat of miscegenation, the judge suggests that the "jungle" also exposes young women to a contagious kind of "barbarism." McAdoo returns to the story of the famed murderess at the end of his essay, where he depicts her descent into urban "savagery." He explains that, on too many occasions, the young woman "had been turned loose into the wild regions of the night clubs." Instead of time at home with her mother, where she might have developed moral and domestic skills appropriate to her station, "[h]er life was spent wholly in the human jungles that are found in great cities." Prostitution charges forced her "slatternly" mother to keep her home. McAdoo reports that in response the girl, "worked up by the chafing, scolding and interference to her liberty, became a wild beast, broke through the cage and killed her keeper." [128]

Obviously, the judge denounces the moral failures of mothers and daughters in a way that articulates anxiety about women's contested participation in public culture. Jazz

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[127] Ibid., pg. 24.

[128] In addition to jazz, critics often blamed feminine vanity for debauched behaviors. Young women's overindulgence in cosmetics and clothing often was said to illustrate, on the one hand, the lure of the advertisement, and on the other, the dismissal of Protestant "modesty" tied to the general unsettling of the previous century's social and moral codes.

not only "lures" women from home, it creates the psychic and moral conditions that indefinitely prevent their domestication. In this case, the "pretty" girl proved to be quite feral. That jazz was blamed for the "barbaric" descent of girls from otherwise "superior homes," further points to fears about the power of "savage" music,[129] and to the problem of public spaces now shared by white women and their "dusky companions." "Jazzing" certainly seemed to shirk the paternal authority that kept girls well-behaved and at home; the possibility of miscegenation also undermined white men's sexual privileges—their exclusive access to the bodies of white women, otherwise secured through that domestic containment.

In addition, jazz music was said to afford loyalists a new physical and philosophical sensibility, one that likewise rattled the social conventions of the previous century. Historian Kathy Ogren writes that jazz music seemed to "speed things up." She claims that, most often, "commentators compared jazz to the mechanical speed up commonly associated with industrial production and urban life."[130] The "Frightful Pace of Modern Jazz," obviously addresses the dangers of speed. Here, again, the young murderess serves as a cautionary tale. Judge McAdoo reports that authorities recovered her "crude and illiterate" diary, in which he discovered "the adventures of a young girl going the *pace of jazz*." Like other critics of urban industrial conditions, McAdoo associates modern speed with moral disorder. The girl's bad behaviors reflect the "pace" of the music, syncopated, swift and fleeting. In fact, he warns that negligent mothers might find their daughters "led astray by fast friends."

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[129] This is discussed with greater detail in the next section.

[130] Ogren, The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pg. 144.

Here, McAdoo's arguments suggest that jazz music transforms the cultural and technological speed of modernity into physical and psychic affect. He also implies that this jazz "pace" enables the girl to navigate modern conditions, to "keep up with the times," and to keep time with the syncopated jolts of the urban streets. In fact, the practices associated with "jazzing" seemed to afford young women a means of negotiating the urban public. McAdoo writes that at school, "[the girl] could not locate the capitals of two states, but before she was sixteen she could find every night club in the city where she lived." In other words, she developed a practical and kinetic knowledge of urban geography, but ignored the trivia and abstraction that often define the spaces of the nation. Further, McAdoo reports that the girl "had only a smattering knowledge of multiplication tables, but came early to evaluate money, developing a canny sense for bargain sales of dresses and fineries and for extracting gifts from men." The jazz-wizened young woman capably navigates the city, as well as its commerce and its population of strangers. Her formal education suffers, but the girl is *streetwise.* At sixteen years old, he writes, "she was as sophisticated as any of the hard-faced elderly women she met at the nightclubs."[131] "Jazzing," then, trained white, middle-class daughters to navigate public spaces historically reserved for the working-classes, for people of color, and for white men.

In addition to disrupting the fortifications of the bourgeois household, jazz was said to penetrate the socio-geographic borders that separated the vice of cities from wholesome rural enclaves. J.R.R. McMahon, one of the *Journal's* most adamant anti-jazz crusaders, produced a series of essays in which he similarly warned against the "scourge"

[131] Ibid.

of popular music. In "Our Jazz Spotted Middle-West" McMahon argues that "small towns and rural districts need clean-up as well." Here, he likens jazz to an epidemic capable of infecting the nation's character: "Our middle-west is supposed to be a citadel of Americanism and righteousness…[y]et a survey of its length and breadth shows that it is badly spotted with the moral smallpox known as Jazz." Like McAdoo, McMahon suggests that negligent mothers are to blame. He argues that rural women lack the protective suspicions of their savvier, urban counterparts; many imagine that country isolation keeps their daughters safe from social ills. McMahon claims, however, that a lack of maternal vigilance renders the rural population even more susceptible to jazz debaucheries. In the country, for instance, young dancers colonize barns and abandoned buildings; they also take rides in cars to and from roadhouses and dance halls. For these reasons, girls from the country face greater moral peril than those on the urban streets. McMahon wonders accusingly: "why are rural women, the guardians of American Purity, apparently so complacent in regards to modern dance?"[132] His accusations obviously hope to rally the reform efforts of Midwestern women. To this end, he invokes metaphors that point to the conditions addressed by many urban activists: noise, disease and, obliquely, miscegenation. Unlike urban reformers, however, McMahon claims that an excess of "modern sophistication" spreads moral "disease." In this case, the carriers of infection are the country's most privileged and educated youth. College students, he explains, return from the cities only to teach their "wholesome" rural counterparts "Afro-American dance" and its "blending of the savage and the civilized." McMahon implies that *music*—not the dance hall and its "dusky" inhabitants—carries the cultural effects of

[132] "Our Jazz Spotted Middle West," *The Ladies Home Journal*, vol. 39, February 22, 1922, pg. 38.

jazz. Miscegenation means that white dancers catch and *incorporate* "Afro-American dance," much like one might contract a disease. McMahon's arguments also imply, however, that racial differences are inessential, not genetically acquired, but culturally disseminated. Hence, "Americanism and righteousness," located in the isolated countryside in fact are entirely porous, susceptible to infiltration by modern, urban culture. McMahon reports that in many areas "the saxophone is making more noise than the threshing machine" and that "small towns and rural solitudes can now boast of a perfect modernity."

"Our Jazz Spotted Middle-West" articulates anxieties common to multicultural nations: that race, class and ethnic distinctions cannot be contained or localized. Again, the popularization of music from the margins rattled the previous century's social and spatial divisions. Music's ability to penetrate the boundaries of the body also disturbed the anti-jazz crusaders at *The Ladies Home Journal*. For instance, in "Our Jazz Spotted Middle-West" McMahon solicits the opinion of dance hall activist Alice Barrows. A self-professed "music expert," Barrows here describes jazz as "[a] physical stimulus of the most degrading sort" and warns that "it acts like a drug on specific nerve centers, no less direct in its effect than certain nerve centers that are witnessed on the dance floor."[133] In another essay, McMahon interviews the famous dance reformer Fenton T. Bott. Bott concurs that "those moaning saxophones and the rest of the instruments make a purely

[133] This calls up the "jitters" associated with conditions of industrial modernity at the turn of the last century and especially after WWI. Many argue that jazz merely reflected a noisy, nervous and disjointed culture. It seems just as likely that the depiction of jazz as a conduit for "nerves" has everything to do with the recent "discovery" of the nervous system and, moreover, the link between that system and the unconscious as mapped out by psychoanalysis. In any case, Miss Barrows recommends "more wholesome forms of recreation, especially group activities such as entertainments and pageants." Pageantry appeals to the exhibitionist and the voyeur. Miss Barrows' suggestion for "safe" entertainments reiterates a "hierarchy of the senses" that places the ear closest to the body's base instincts; sound and music especially, poses more of a threat to the nerves and to the morals than visual stimulus and a seated audience (Ibid., pg. 37).

sensual appeal." More tellingly, perhaps, Bott argues that jazz "calls up low and rowdy instincts."[134] His language here seems to throw into relief one of the underlying assumptions of the jazz panic. Implicitly, instincts," however "low and rowdy," already are *present* in the bodies of dancers. This suggests that the physical effects of music not only rattle social controls, they *reveal* unthinkable desires otherwise obscured by those prohibitions. Thus, dance music seemed to alarm critics for what it uncovered, as much as for the conduct that it was said to inspire: left to their "instincts" white women might make inappropriate object choices.[135]

In *The Ladies Home Journal* campaign against jazz, the idyllic "middle-west," the feminine body, and the body politic (via McMahon's complaints about "equal rights"), are configured as spaces similarly vulnerable to a kind of socio-genetic intrusion. "Afro-american" music, according to these authors, invades the implicitly feminine spaces of the body, the household, and the nation. In the following sections, I discuss the ways in which discourse on the effects of jazz music illustrates white, paternalist concerns about the origins of America. Here, I argue that the guilty residue of colonialism permeates debates about jazz music.

The Specter of the "Savage"

Dr. Percy Grant, rector at Manhattan's Church of the Ascension campaigned from the pulpit against syncopated pop. The *Literary Digest* printed some of his more colorful

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[134] McMahon, J.R.R., "Unspeakable Jazz Must Go!" *Ladies Home Journal*, vol 38, December, 1921, pg. 34.

[135] As I suggest in the next Chapter, the "white slave panic" and the image of the black "rapist"—which, of course, coincided with Northern migration and white women's participation in public culture—illustrates 1) white masculine fears about black male "prowess," 2) white masculine anxiety about white women's otherwise "repressed" desires and, 3) a guilty projection having to do with the historical rapes of black women by white men.

sermons and, for obvious reasons, historians frequently cite this as one of the most incisive instances of the jazz panic:

> 'Jazz goes back to the African Jungle and is one of the crying evils of the day. It means retrogression, a savage crash and bang that rings the bell for full steam astern. Its effect is to make you clatter and, as Voltaire said, to 'go on all fours,' to which I would add, and to whisk your tail around a tree.' Plato said that whenever modes of music change, morals change. Music has changed greatly within the past few years.'[136]

In the wake of Northern migration, Grant's sermon likely perpetuated post-bellum fears about the influence of African-American cultural forms. The "jungle" rhythms said to untether American music from the "elevated" harmonies of an enlightened Europe here threaten western civilization with social and genetic backslide. Grant's bizarre invocation of Darwinism in fact suggests that African music reverses primate evolution. He argues that musical "retrogression" makes one "clatter" and "go on all fours"[137] to which he adds the redundant flourish, "[and] whisk one's tail around a tree."

Aside from rhetorical hyperbole, images of savage regression point to the guilt and phobia lingering in the post-colonial imagination. Complaints about the return of "barbarism" via the "music of the machine age" vaguely recall the means by which the west secured its industrial progress.[138] In fact, Grant's mixed-metaphors speak to this

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[136] As cited in, Gilbert, Henry F., "Concerning Jazz," *The New Music Review*, December, 1922, pg. 220.

[137] From Voltaire's letter to Rousseau: "I have received, sir, your new book against the human species, and I thank you for it…No one has ever been so witty as you are in trying to turn us into brutes. To read your book makes one long to go on all fours." Grant's citation is a reference to Voltaire's defense of humanism. It was about Rousseau's work, however, that Voltaire famously said: "I disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it." The irony that Voltaire, architect of free speech, also despised the church seems entirely lost on the Rector Grant. See Selected Letters of Voltaire, trans. Richard A. Brooks, (New York: New York University Press, 1973), pg. 179.

[138] His description of regressive sounds—"a savage crash"— immediately precedes an industrial adage: "Full steam astern." As an emblem of modern technology, the steam engine should signify progress, not the backsliding into "savagery" associated with "jungle" rhythms. This is similar to Adorno's complaint that

ambivalence about a modern world built on colonial exploitation. The "savage crash" that "rings a bell for full steam astern" pictures modernity (as a steamboat?) pirated by the colonial "other." Here, the "savage" clearly returns as a symptom of industrialization.[139]

Jazz seemed to signal the return of the repressed in a number of ways. Both critics and defenders claimed that "jungle" rhythms gave music direct access to the body and to the psyche. Syncopation and dissonance (as opposed to harmony and a regular beat) appeared to loosen social restraints. Historian Aaron Esman writes that jazz "'was associated with vital impulses…precisely the id drives that the superego of the bourgeois culture sought to repress.'"[140] Again, the music was said to circumvent paternal commands that kept bodies in place. In his *Black Culture, Black Consciousness*, Lawrence Levine similarly argues that,

> By threatening to expose and return what was repressed jazz made enmity with the respectable arbiters of society's culture and of segments of the Negro middle and professional classes who desired to become part of mainstream America and found jazz an anachronistic embarrassment.[141]

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industrial culture heralds, ironically, a return to "barbarism." For Adorno, however, "barbarism" means a reversion to superstition and reticence in the face of authoritarianism, which negates the liberties afforded by modern democracy.

[139] Both missionaries and slave traders worked in service to European progress; the pseudo-science of racial taxonomy legitimated these colonialist ventures. In jazz panic literature, references to the "jungle" invoke the assumptions of popular anthropology, which also offered justifications for the exploitation of less "civilized" cultures. Grant's condemnation of jazz pronounces concerns common to post-colonial conditions: those exploited by the colonial project might threaten the same civilization that their exploitation made possible. For further explanation, see Sander L Gilman's "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Towards an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," (in *Critical Inquiry*, no. 12, Autmn, 1985, pgs. 204-238) for a discussion of pseudo scientific fascination with the "Hottentot Venus" which configured the black, female body as the "primitive" subject of anthropological speculation, and of course, Edward Said's Culture and Imperialism, (New York: Vintage Books), 1994.

[140] As cited in Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2007, pg 293.

[141] Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom, New Rock: Oxford University Press, 2007, pg 293.

Jazz troubled some critics for its purported abilities to conjure invisible forces, both psychic and social. It threatened to "expose and return" precisely the repressions essential to modern progress—not just instincts held in place, or the hierarchical constraints of bourgeois social order, but a colonial history glaringly at odds with the tenets of liberal humanism. Hence, the specter of the "savage" crops up time and again as the guilty projection of American modernity.

One of the most poignant articulations of the panic over the popularization of "negro" music was Anne Faulkner's 1921 polemic, written for the *Ladies Home Journal*, whose title asks: "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?"[142] Here, Faulkner claims that jazz produces deleterious effects in the human psyche. Unlike the innocuous syncopation of Slavic czardas (read white) or early ragtime, jazz "destroys" the mind with its discordant beats.[143] According to Faulkner, this new music puts syncopation "too off key," and hence, the fundaments of the western musical canon, "rhythm, melody and harmony," fly into a state of discord. Ultimately, her Platonic arguments about the dangers of unbalanced sounds give way to more revealing claims about the origins of jazz syncopation. In this case, it is not the brothel that lends black music its dangerous sex appeal, but the numerous, unnamed cites of African diaspora. Faulkner writes,

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[142] Faulkner was a vocal education reformer. She produced a record and pamphlet titled, What We Hear in Music: A Course of Study in Music History and Appreciation, for Use in the Home, High Schools, Normal Schools, Colleges, and Universities. Also for Special Courses in Conservatories, Music Clubs, which was published in 1917, by the Department of Education and the "Victor talking Machine Company."

[143] By the end of World War I, ragtime seemed tame compared to jazz. This is due in part, at least, to the influence of dance instructors Irene and Vernon Castle, who did for ragtime dance what Paul Whiteman was said to do for jazz music. I detail their dance training programs in the fourth chapter.

> Jazz originally was the accompaniment of the voodoo dancer, stimulating the half-crazed barbarian to the vilest deeds. The weird chant, accompanied by the syncopated rhythm of the voodoo invokers, has also been employed by other barbaric people to stimulate brutality and sensuality. That it has a demoralizing effect upon the human brain has been demonstrated by many scientists.[144]

Here, her claim that "primitive" music has effects both "sensual" and "demoralizing," echo the arguments of other racial purists who warn about the irrepressible urges of sexual "savages."[145] Like Grant, Faulkner assumes that the *sounds* of racial difference are as dangerous to civilization as the mixed-race venues of the speakeasy and the dance hall. She also suggests that "barbaric" music produces a *psychic* regression, one that likewise threatens the new world—its scientific progress and social engineering—with evolutionary backslide: the "weird chant" of the "half-crazed barbarian" demonstrably alters the "human brain," or so say many anonymous scientists.

Faulkner's attempts to demystify the effects of jazz again betray anxieties common to the post-colonial west. Certainly, the idea that music may possess the mind and body as if by occult power is at least as old as the myth of the siren's song. Enlightened progress, however, meant to eradicate "superstition" and "savagery." Likewise, modern science promised to make sense of the natural world and human behavior.[146] Hence, Faulkner invokes scientific authority, perhaps, to minimize the occult force of jazz, but her tone of horror suggests that the music's effects remain inexplicable, and thus beyond the rule of modern epistemology. In other words,

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[144] *The Ladies Home Journal*, August, 1921, pg. 17.

[145] It may be worth noting here, that even Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger, who was arrested in 1913 for demanding birth control, eventually lead her charge under the banner of Eugenics.

[146] Psychoanalysis might illumine the self-alienating mysteries of the psyche, just as ethnography would explain and improve the social and religious customs of racial "others."

"voodoo" here circumvents the intellect *and* defies the explanatory command of science. In this way, "black magic" completely undermines western order predicated on *reason*.

The "mystical" power of jazz clearly rattled the precepts of scientific rationalism. Several notable scholars nonetheless vied to make sense of black music through "scientific" or ethnographic study. Dr. Walter Kingsley, a professor of musical "ethnology" from Columbia University made a career of examining "jungle" rhythms. *The Literary Digest* and *Current Opinion* frequently published Kingsley's "findings" and he was widely consulted as an academic authority. Despite these intellectual credentials, Kingsley's jazz history sounds entirely similar to those mentioned above. For instance, in an article for the *New York Sun*, the professor elucidates the origin of jazz band "shouts," emphatic calls issued by band leaders between riffs. The practice, he notes, first was heard in the plantation south where "the call and response patterns of African speech mingled with the social rituals of the new world." Of particular interest, he writes "the phrase 'jazz her up' was used to rile a party when the fun languished." His initial account of the history of performance practice here seems plausible enough. The rest of his report, however, reads like paranoid fantasy:

> No doubt the witch-doctor and the medicine men on the Kongo used the same term at those jungle parties where the Tom-Tom's throbbed and the sturdy warriors gave their pep an added kick with the rich brews of Yohimbin beer, the precious products of the Kameruns.[147]

Like Faulkner, Kingsley imagines an origin scene in which "savage" music conjures uncanny forces. In this case, jazz magic also endows practitioners with a peculiar—and

[147] Reprinted in "The Primitive Appeal of Jazz," *Literary Digest*, Vol. 55, August 25, 1917, pg. 28-29.

perhaps enviable—virility. Kingsley's imaginative description leaves little doubt that, despite its "feminization" by literary elites, jazz also was linked to a "savage" *masculinity*.[148] In the Congo of white men's imagination, rudimentary jazz and rich beer animate "throbbing tom-toms" and "sturdy warriors." The shout "jazz *her* up," something done to the feminine pronoun, gets the party started.

Similarly, Jeanette Murphy Robinson, a well-published Southern debutante and proponent of African "re-colonization," described her "study" on the "origins of negro music" for *Popular Science Monthly*. The article waxes with nostalgia about Robinson's lost childhood spent in close proximity to slave quarters. She writes,

> During my childhood my observations were centered upon a very few old negroes who came directly from Africa, and upon many others whose parents were African born, and I early came to the conclusion, based upon negro authority, that the greater part of their music, their methods, their scale, their type of thought, their dancing, their patting of feet, their clapping of hands, their grimaces and pantomime, and their gross superstitions came straight from Africa. [149]

Robinson calls up anonymous "negro authority" to bolster her assertion that black music in America sustains a forgotten relationship to the natural world. Unlike the religious music of "civilization," she argues, black spirituals remain tied to African animism.

Ultimately, her research aims to illustrate that ragtime and blues, by way of church music, merely hide behind the accoutrement of civilization. As evidence, she recalls her conversation with a black minister in Harlem who, she claims, speaks only

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[148] In his study of jazz age literature, David Chinitz argues that jazz was feminized ("Dance Little Lady: Poets, Flappers and the Gendering of Jazz," in Modernism, Gender and Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach, ed. Lisa Rado, New York: Garland Publications, 1997, pgs.

[149] "The Survival of African Music in America," *Popular Science Monthly*, September 1899, pg. 660.

under conditions of anonymity for fear of magic repercussions. As if to legitimate his authenticity, Robinson explains that the minister "is very black" and that "his parents were *pure* Africans." Under these dubious research conditions, it comes as no surprise that the minister in fact confirms Robinson's suspicions. "'Most of the songs [spirituals] come from Africa" she reports, and their magic rhythms "*are almost supernatural* in their hold on people." The Harlem minister further (if allegedly) confides that, through music and dance rituals "many of our race are still under the influence of voodooism." Robinson concludes that "dark magic" lurks in even the most innocuous hymnals. She writes that, "the veneer of civilization and religious fervor and Bible Truth is entirely superficial. *The African is under it all*."[150]

Similar warnings suggest the anachronistic presence of savage "others" hidden in the recesses of modern America. In a letter to the journal *Musical America*, Dr. J.R. Cunningham denounces the editorial argument that jazz well represents the character of the nation.[151] In his letter to *Musical America*, Cunningham articulates in clear terms a common sentiment to which others merely allude. "Jazz," he writes, "is the nigger in the musical woodpile." [152] Here, the Reverend literalizes the racial phobias that linger more or less implicitly in other criticisms of jazz: he likens the music to a black man hiding just outside the home. This once popular southern adage sometimes described the camouflage of run-away slaves—hidden by darkness or "blending with the woodpile." In other instances, it might refer to secret "negro" ancestry concealed in the blood of "white"

[150] "The Survival of African Music in America," *Popular Science Monthly*, September 1899, pg. 660.
[151]The Reverend Cunningham was deeply involved in the "social hygiene" movement and similar reform efforts; through the United Presbyterian Churches and the YMCA he provided moral outreach to soldiers and to students at state colleges and universities in the South. (Information taken from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Richmond, Virginia: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1918).
[152] "Tilts at Carl Engel Over Jazz," *Musical American*, May 13th, 1922.

southerners. Usually, it signified unknown circumstances, suspicious persons or secret weapons. In this case, the metaphor once again suggests that jazz smuggles "black magic" in the guise of "modern" industrial aesthetics.

Cunningham argues, for instance, that jazz *cannot* represent the American character because (again) "[b]lood, bone and sinew it is African and African voodooism at that." As a product of visceral magic, jazz "awakens no refinement, inspires no sentiment of beauty or purity, and suggests no clean or sweet memories…" Obviously, the Reverend here reiterates the denigration of music that appeals to the body. In syncopation, especially, he hears an "impurity" that separates jazz from "authentic" American music, which he characterizes by the aesthetic investments of the romantic era ("beauty" "purity," "refinement" etc.). Like other "arbiters of taste," Cunningham's musical preferences align U.S. culture with its more "refined" European ancestry. His language, however, suggests that jazz sullies that sense of history, and by extension, American identity. He writes that the music "suggests no clean or sweet memories," and that its "sole purpose is to make us *forget ourselves*…" For Cunningham, jazz "savagery" seemed to interrupt a sense of history dependent on America's bourgeois "refinement." [153] More importantly, perhaps, his assertions about the savagery hidden in

[153]While reformers denounced the ways in which jazz seemed to signal the return of "barbarism," its defenders lauded the release from restraint that jazz purportedly offered. Jazz *primitivism* was, like progressivism, a pointed response to the conditions of industrial modernity —alienation, mechanical labor and the psycho-social forms of repression necessary to bourgeios order. As an aesthetic movement and a social practice, primitivism offered a means to escape the trappings of a failed "civilization." Primitivism, however, only reiterated the logics of the colonial imagination that made "black magic" the foil of "white industry." In his Swinging the Machine, Joel Dinerstein argues that primitivism "can be seen as an identity politics practiced by white elites intent on preserving the terms 'civilized and 'rational' for themselves while confessing a lack of human resources for rejuvenation of body and spirit." (Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology and African American Culture Between the Wars, University of Massachusetts Press, 2003, pg.155). It seems worth pointing out, that African American artists also adopted primitivism as a strategy. Although the politics of that adoption clearly differed, the imagery—Josephine Baker's famous banana skirt, for instance—was culled also from the colonial imagination. For further discussion of

the recesses of American modernity also point to lingering anxieties about the nation's identity and its origins. Below, I consider the ways in which musicians and critics attempted to reconcile those doubts through debates about the aesthetic value and cultural origins of ragtime and jazz music.[154]

Progress and Paternity

The arrival of ragtime and jazz seemed to provide a kind of metaphorical evidence about the ways in which U.S. history veered from the standard stories of "prophetic progress." The popularization of black music in fact threw into relief specifically American anxieties about national origins—indeed, about its *paternity*. In fact, many post-war music journalists configure jazz as America's artistic progeny. Hence, critics often depict the music as an "abomination" of form; its white defenders imagine jazz as a child in need of rescue. Debates about the origins of the music indicate that jazz not only posed the threat of cultural miscegenation, *jazz was miscegenation already realized.*

Many early century music journals facilitated debates about the ethnic ratios of ragtime and jazz. Some critics insisted that both were derivative forms; black musicians merely had appropriated, and often *denigrated*, elements of European music. In an issue about ragtime published in 1899, the editors at *Etude* assure readers that the novel syncopation of ragtime music "has a respectable genesis, an old venerable one indeed; one need not go back any further than to the music of the godlike Beethoven to find

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primitivism see Seiglende Lemke's Primitivist Modernists:Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[154] Most of the sources cited here are not progressives. I include their arguments in order to demonstrate a historical shift—both away from the tenets of progressive social thought (via lost generation ennui) and towards a new kind of "progress" that involved the absorption and synthesis of otherwise disruptive music.

examples of ragtime music."[155] In the *American Musician*, however, W.F. Gates argues that while Beethoven, Wagner and Hayden employ syncopation as "a legitimate and beautiful medium of expression," ragtime signals that the idiom "has fallen into bad company."[156]

Similarly, *The Musician* hosted a series of academic conversations about the degree to which ragtime contained black, Creole and European characteristics. In an article on "Congo Music," the famous linguist Lafcadio Hearn claims that the "the creoles had taken [syncopation] from the blacks" and to this "injected a rudimentary type of music." "But I must tell you," Heard warns, "Creole music is mostly Negro music thought often remodeled by French composers."[157] Hearn's friend and colleague Henry Krehbeil further clarifies his arguments in a letter to the editor:

> Far from believing that that the Creole song in New Orleans was corrupted French and Spanish music, Heard believed that the opposite process had taken place. It was Negro music that had been sophisticated by French and Spanish influences.[158]

The editors of the *New York Sun* wrote admiring letters to the *Musician* as well, confirming the conclusions of other contributors. Here, *The Sun* concurs that ragtime songs "indeed, reproduce Spanish and French melodies of a century ago, filtered through the dull, bewildered medium of the Congo consciousness."[159]

Defenders of jazz, those who felt that it might nicely represent the national

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[155] "Ragtime," *Etude*, June 1899, pg. 245.
[156] "Ethiopian Syncopation—The Decline of Ragtime," *The Musician*, October, 1902, pg. 341.
[157] Krehebiel, "Lafcadio Hearn and Congo Music," *The American Musician*, November 1906, 544-46.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

"spirit," often minimized its roots in African and Creole traditions. In another article on "Congo" music, Carl Engels insists that while "elements" of jazz "bear racial features that are unequivocally American…this Americanism is not exclusively a tribal one; it is not content to borrow from the negro, to filch from the Indian." He assures readers that, instead of "Congo Consciousness," jazz represents "a contrapunctal complexity…born out of complex, strident, present-day American life."[160] Here, jazz becomes a symptom of a sophisticated cosmopolitanism, rather than modern "barbarism." In a letter to the editor of *Current Opinion*, another exasperated observer argues that: "It seems hardly just to call Negro songs the folk songs of America. We are a conglomerate people, and no one race can claim a monopoly on this matter."[161]

The well-known music critic Paul Fritz Laubenstein wrote one of the more eloquent descriptions of jazz as a "complex" American music. In *Current Opinion*, Laubenstein recalls his experience at an American encampment near Champagne, where black soldiers played jazz during the war. He writes,

> …so strange sounding in these strange surroundings, somehow characteristically bound up with our national life. Traces of negro in it…a bit of the wild free breath of the Indian too, here and there a splotch of Spanish coloring and occasionally a reminiscence of Irish and Scottish forefathers. But in the main its principal element is just plain American and its rhythms are the rhythms of our American life.[162]

For better or worse, Laubenstein insists, jazz expresses American "cosmopolitanism." Even the "heterogeneity" of instruments in the band point to the urban mélange

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[160] Engel, Carl, "Jazz: A Musical Discussion," *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1922, pgs. 182-189.
[161] Anonymous, "Delving into the Genealogy of Jazz," *Current Opinion*, August 1919, pg. 97.
[162] Eliot, Gilbert, Jr., "The Doughboy Carries His Music with Him," *Music Review*, August 1919, pg. 413.

characteristic of American modernity: "Here the more generally accepted instruments of the Occident gaily fraternize with the red man's tam-tam and the Oriental mussette, and the larger drum of the African and Spanish castanets."[163] Laubenstien suggests, however, that such a mix makes for clever but ultimately *vapid* music. Because jazz employs "arrangers" rather than "composers," it produces nothing more than pastiche; jazz is a remix, not an original. The jazz musician, moreover, adopts a kind of "parasitism," that makes his technique derivative and thus, like an over bred animal, affected with "creative sterility."[164]

Some "arbiters of taste" later hoped to rescue ragtime and jazz from the popular arts and, less explicitly, from its African-American progenitors. In these instances, phallic, uterine and procreative metaphors abound—implicating, perhaps, those paternal anxieties common to multicultural and post-colonial nations. For instance, music producer Isaac Goldberg, writing in the *American Mercury*, describes the relationship between artistic creation and national identity in oddly phallic terms. He writes that "we speak of jazz as if it were the product of the Negro alone. True enough, its primary associations, like its rhythms, are black…it reaches from the Black South to the Black North but in between is has been touched by *the commercial wand of the jew"* [my emphasis]. Goldberg further confirms that the "commercial wand" serves a procreative function: "What we call loosely by the name of jazz is thus no longer jet black; musical miscegenation set in from the beginning and today it would be a wise son if it knew its father."[165] This connection, between the father-composer and the paternal origins of the

[163] "Jazz—Debit and Credit," *Musical Quarterly,* Vol. XV, No. 4, 1929, pg. 609.
[164] Ibid.
[165] "Aaron Copland and his Jazz," *American Mercury,* September, 1927, pg. 63.

nation, is well illustrated in a letter written by the editor of the *Musical Courier*. In defense of ragtime, he argues, "whether it be judged good or bad, it is original with Americans—it is their own creation, and people must do its own art-creation for the same reason that an individual must do his own lovemaking."[166]

In fact, many argued that what American music needed was a father figure. The composer Charles Wakefield Cadman, for instance, describes ragtime syncopation as the "embryo" of better music. In a defense of ragtime published in the *Musical Courier*, Cadman implores the reader:

> Please remember that underneath all that inanity, the inanity of most of the Broadway output, the elemental emotional appeal, is found the germ of national expression. It may be quite embryonic, quite crude, quite primitive, but it is obviously pregnant and needs but intelligent guidance to lead it to fruition and development.[167]

Though confusing (a pregnant embryo?), Cadman's metaphor suggests that debates about the origins of American music, and its potential as a national form, also are arguments about art-as-*progeny*, the creative authority hitched to masculinity and tied up with ideas of singularity and authorship. If American music cannot be called *original work*—because it, like America, lacks a single creative origin—then the bastard child needs "intelligent guidance." In other words, Cadman recommends adoption. By the mid 1920's, white jazz critics began to predict the coming of the "great American composer." Many claimed that a "hero" would redeem jazz music from its lowly origins, dilute its associations with savagery and elevate its sounds from those of the vaudeville

[166] "Anti-Ragtime," *The New Republic*, November 6, 1915, pg. 19.
[167] "Cadman on Ragtime," *The Musical Courier*, August 12, 1914, pg. 31.

stage and the "Congo" party. For instance, in *The Musician*, composer W.L. Hubbard argues that, "Much of the output is banal, crude and hopelessly cheap, but down under all the mass of commonness and worthlessness, there are elements which it is believed the coming American composer will discover and utilize."[168] Similarly, in *Current Opinion,* the playwright and musical lexographer Rupert Hughes claims that jazz contains "something very wonderful which the composer with ears made in America will build into the master-music of tomorrow."[169] Here, Hughes suggests that written composition will submit music otherwise "played-by-ear" to the authorial intent of a single, "masterly" composer. Moreover, the messiah of American music might then redeem the "worthless" sounds from the "mass commonness." Hubbard describes his arrival in appropriately Evangelical language: "…when the man comes, who, taking the spirit can glorify it, ennoble it and beautify it through his genius, that man will be the first real American composer, and his music will be the first true American art music the world has received."[170]

Paul Whiteman's jazz concert at the Aoelian Theater in 1926 was lauded by the critical establishment as the moment that legitimated jazz music. Whiteman, a white band leader from Denver and frequent defender of jazz, introduced George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" to wide critical acclaim. Critics described this "elevation" in poignantly paternalist and procreative terms. In the *Musical Quarterly*, Carl Engels explains that "Mr. Gershwin has written not only a very courageous but creditable

[168] "A Hopeful View of The Ragtime Roll," *The Musician*, August 1920, pg. 6.
[169] "Jazz and Ragtime are the Preludes to Great American Music," *Current Opinion*, August 20, 1920, pgs. 199-201.
[170] Ibid.

work—creditable because his jazz concerto contains no trace of the vulgar." Further, he writes:

> If the dance rhythms employed by Mr. Gershwin occasionally fail to excite the listener it is because they are a trifle too persistent, or not reckless enough. In themselves these rhythms have nothing that should bar them from marrying into the proud old family of concertos and symphonies which are inclined to forget their early and somewhat low born origins. An addition of a little red blood has often saved the weakened blue."[171]

Here, the "coming composer" arrives in time to rescue jazz from "vulgarity," yet he preserves the "red blood" that seems to invigorate white audiences. Gershwin's rhythms "fail to excite" listeners who prefer dance music; cerebral rather than corporeal effects clearly mark the new composition as a "higher" mode of music. More importantly, perhaps, symphonic jazz, for its new refinement, might marry "into the proud old family of concertos and symphonies."

Conclusion

Percy Grant's famous tirade (cited above) also appeared in *The New Music Review* in 1922 as evidence that, contrary to the hopes of the journal's editorial staff, the inclination to blame new music for wayward youth had persisted into the next decade. "But it is merely a scapegoat" one writer for the journal protests. "I myself remember (not so very long ago, either) solemn resolutions being passed by the Musicians' Unions disapproving of, and forbidding the playing of ragtime." Outcries over the dangers of popular music and dance, he argues, ignore the realities of youthful disobedience: "These young people would have gone to the devil anyway…given the tendencies towards badness in their

[171] "Views and Reviews," *Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April, 1926, pgs. 299-314.

nature." Most early century music journals facilitated similar debates about the aesthetic and social value of ragtime and jazz. *The New Music Reviews'* editorial response to Grant illustrates a shift in the tone of those debates. By the early 1920's, jazz had found a vocal cadre of white defenders, many of whom rejected the condemnations of Evangelical progressives. Again, their attempts to legitimate the music as an aesthetic form, if not a social practice, coincided with its appropriation by white musicians and arrangers. Indeed, music journals began to augur the "coming of a great composer," whose talents would refine and elevate jazz music.

The *Reviews'* response to Grant also indicates the waning influence of progressive thought, and especially its penchant for social "uplift." Here, the writer claims that "tendencies toward badness" are dispositions essential to youth, "who would have gone to the devil anyway."[172] Noel Cowards' 1924 dance hall hit, "Dance Little Lady," expresses the same pessimism about the unredeemable flapper, although Coward credits his own music for her demise.[173] Obviously, lost generation cynicism diverged from the more hopeful philosophies of the previous decade. Historian George Cotkin describes this difference with great clarity. [174] He writes:

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[173] The lyrics read: "Though you're only seventeen, far too much of life you've seen, syncopated child. If you only knew what your path was leading to, you'd become less wild. But I know it's vain, trying to explain, while there's insane music in your brain." See David Chinitz' discussion in "Dance Little Lady: Poets, Flappers and the Gendering of Jazz.," in Modernism, Gender and Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach, ed. Lisa Rado, New York: Garland Publications, 1997, pgs.

[174] Jazz age literature provides the most familiar examples: Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, metaphorically configures the decade in terms of emasculation and lost rigor. F. Scott Fitzgerald's entire oeuvre, of course, embalms the image of the flapper. In particular, his first novel This Side of Paradise (1920) announced the end of the Victorian daughter, and Flappers and Philosophers (1925) further chronicled youth run amok.

> Before the first War, many had recognized the banality inherent in Victorian views of progress efficiency and culture. In contrast, the Lost Generation of the 1920's had declared, in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.'" [175]

While by no means cheerful, Grants' sermons assume the possibility of historical recuperation, of a "better" future engineered to reflect white bourgeois values and to extend the prophetic trajectory of European history. The moral disasters associated with industrialization, and especially with WWI, threw into question this narrative of progress. Many of the musicians and critics who defend jazz argue that the music offers a way to live "for the moment," to experience the present precisely *without* assurances of a better future.

Eventually, its break from the historical past and celebration of modern transience became that for which jazz was lauded. In his 1947 essay, "I Discovered Jazz in America," the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre describes the scene at Nick's pub in Manhattan, as follows:

> They play, you listen. No one dreams…It is dry, violent, pitiless…It does not speak of love, it does not comfort. It is hurried like the people who take the subway or eat at the Automat…there is a merciless pianist, a bass player who tortures the strings. *They are speaking to the best part of you, the toughest, the freest, to the part which wants neither melody nor refrain, but the deafening climax of the moment* (my emphasis). [176]

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[175] In other words, World War I seemed to suspend faith in the grand trifecta of American democratic society: Protestantism, Militarism, and Liberal Humanism. (George Cotkin, Existential America, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005, pg. 24.)

[176] "I discovered jazz in America," reprinted in Frontiers of Jazz, ed. Ralph de Teladano, (New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1962), pgs. 48-49.

According to Sartre, jazz means freedom from bourgeois sentiments like "love," "comfort," and "pity." It offers neither assurances about a better future (melody) nor romantic reprieve from the present (refrain). Instead, jazz situates listeners in quickly-passing moments. Sartre suggests that, for these reasons, jazz embodies strengths specific to America's culture and its location in western history. It signifies and *compels* participation in the present and thus suggests a break from the cultural and moral legacies of Europe.[177]

Reformers like Percy Grant, however, understood the jazz ethos—its reckless celebration of the sensual moment—as a demonstration that America had lost faith in progress. In the same sermon mentioned above, Grant describes the effects of music in language similar to that used by Sartre. His objections, in fact, mirror Sartre's praise: American dance embodies the sensations of the moment, with no regard for the future. The rector complains, for instance, that "Jazz says: 'Cut it out; don't dream. Don't worry about transient things. Seize the day. Don't worry about the possibilities of pleasure…" Thus, for "modern" dancers, Grant claims, "there is no pathos, no idealism."[178] Like Sartre, Grant hears the destruction of bourgeois idealism in jazz music and, thus, the end of a historical progress linked to Europe's legacies.

As I suggest above, the popularization of music from the social margins began with sound reproduction technologies and with the piano's disruptive ubiquity. Ragtime entered the bourgeois household on piano rolls and sheet music; jazz both intruded on

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[177] Obviously, jazz was the soundtrack of the Lost Generation's gleeful existentialism.

[178] Like most critics, Grant warns that jazz "is for sensation" alone, and moreover, that "instead of symbolism…it becomes sensuality." For the 19th century bourgeoisie, "symbolism" in dance and music often articulated "higher" ideals. The orderly Waltz, for example, enacted the principles of bourgeois courtship (among these, perhaps, were "love," "comfort" and "pity"). I discuss this more extensively in Chapter Four.

domestic spaces and lured women into a dangerously heterogeneous public. These musics, according to social reformers and activist judges like Rev. Percy Grant and William McAdoo, unsettled the institution of bourgeois motherhood and threatened the nation with social and genetic backslide. Further, these complaints about jazz music's ability to permeate social, geographic and genetic spaces clearly reflected anxieties specific to a post-colonial and multi-cultural nations. Jazz music was likened to a "rapist" a "voodoo practitioner" and an escaped slave. Again, hiding under the accoutrement of civilization, jazz seemed to represent the "return of the savage."

Finally, I suggest that debates about the origins of jazz music often attempted to reconcile paternal anxieties about the origins of the nation. While most of these sources are not progressives, I include their arguments in order to demonstrate a historical shift—both away from the tenets of progressive social thought (via lost generation ennui) and towards a new kind of "progress" that involved the absorption and synthesis of otherwise disruptive music. Perhaps music's ability to rattle social controls—via the traversal of various material and symbolic spaces—urgently required its synthetic "elevation." In any case, white jazz musicians and critics delighted in Gershwin's *Rhapsody* and Paul Whiteman's symphonic "uplift," which made black, working-class music palatable for "refined" audiences.

As this research indicates, the *sounds* of music alarmed predominantly male progressive Evangelicals. In contrast, women settlement workers dominated urban uplift and recreation reform movements that attempted to regulate dance halls and cabarets. In the following chapter, I consider progressive discourse about the spaces in which ragtime and jazz were experienced. I argue that the popularization of working-class music and

dance cultures seemed to obstruct, on the one hand, the possibility of a public that mirrored the social ideals of the bourgeois household, and on the other, the rational ordering of space significant to progressive visions of modernity.

Chapter Three: The Dangers of the Dance Hall

Introduction

"The Town is dance mad. If you walk along Grand Street on any night in the week during the winter months, the glare of lights and the blare of music strike you on every side."[179]

--Belle Lindner-Isreals, "The Way of the Girl"

In 1909, New York social reformer Belle Lindner-Isreals described night life in the Bowery as a sensory assault. "The glare of lights" and "the blare of music" emanating from the dance halls along Grand Street in the Lower East Side here "strike" the unwitting pedestrian. Lindner-Isreal's language illustrates the impact that new, music and dance cultures seemed to have on the public spaces of industrial cities. During the teens and twenties, dance halls proliferated in major metropolitan areas. They appeared as well in small towns, along the coastlines, and on country roads outside municipal ordinances. Among the numerous commercial amusements that arrived in tandem with the concept of "leisure time," dance halls were the favorite of working-class women. Kathy Peiss explains in her *Cheap Amusements*, that "[a]fter a long day laboring in a factory or shop, young women dressed themselves in their fanciest finery, put on their dancing shoes, and hurried out to the neighborhood hall, ballroom or saloon…"[180] Moreover, like other early century amusements, dance halls were subject to the regulatory efforts of progressive

[179] Belle Lindner-Isreals, "The Way of the Girl," *Survey*, July 3rd, 1909, pg. 496.
[180] Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 1986, pg. 88.

reformers, who understood these spaces as dens of iniquity—and in this way reflective of urban industrial conditions.

In the last chapter, I described the ways in which music disrupted a progress hitched to the gendered separation of spheres, and hence, to bourgeois *paternalism*. Ragtime and jazz music were said to invade the household and to lure women into the heterogeneous spaces of the dance halls and cabarets. Complaints about music, then, also resounded with anxieties about women's presence in public culture. In this chapter, I describe the ways in which musical spaces—dance halls and cabarets—seemed to disrupt a progress linked to bourgeois *maternalism*. As I illustrate below, women progressives vied to create a public culture that extended the values and practices of the bourgeois household. To this end, many were involved in urban planning projects—including recreation reforms—that aimed to order the unruly spaces of urban industrial cities. Unlike many of the Evangelicals described in the previous chapter, women reformers hoped to unhitch "progress" from the gendered division of spheres and to create a public culture in which they could productively participate.

The ragtime and jazz dance halls constantly challenged those efforts. First, the behaviors of girls who frequented the dance halls undermined assumptions about women's inherent morality, and thus, the authority of women reformers, who justified their participation in public culture as an extension of the maternal gesture. In response, activists attempted to "cultivate" the working girl and to teach standards of behavior that reflected the gender expectations of the white bourgeoisie—rather than those associated the new heterogeneous, urban, industrial culture. Second, and after Prohibition, rowdy dance halls and mixed-race cabarets, often hidden in the recesses of the city, defied

progressive efforts to create a more rational public culture through the careful and visual ordering of public space.

In his *Atlantic Crossings*, historian Daniel Rodgers explains that progressives held a "deep conviction" that "the core values of a society should be written in its street designs and public buildings, its shelters and its cityscapes." [181] Well-ordered cities might make for the kind of progress that reflected a rational and humane modernity, rather than the bad ends of industrial development. Below, I describe how progressive reformers associated the dance halls and its attendant debaucheries with the conditions and logics of industrialism and commercial capitalism. For these reasons, dance halls were understood to reflect the "tough" conditions of an implicitly masculine public culture (*The Working Girl and Industrial Culture*). Next, I illustrate the ways in which progressive reformers attempted to change public culture by extending the functions and values of the bourgeois household. Activists hoped that municipal dance halls might work to properly socialize working girls and new immigrants. Moreover, women reformers imagined dance halls as spaces in which they might act as mothers to the masses (*The Maternal Public*). Finally, I argue that Prohibition era dance halls and cabarets—unruly, uncharted, promiscuous and heterogeneous—defied the "core values" of progressive social thought, and signaled the failures of dance hall reforms (*Promiscuous Spaces*).

[181] Daniel Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in the Progressive Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pg. 161.

The Working Girl and Industrial Culture

The dangers of the dance halls first came to the attention of settlement workers in New York and Chicago around the turn of the last century.[182] Jane Addams, founder of Chicago's famous Hull House Settlement, and Belle Lindner-Isreals of the New York Council of Jewish Women, wrote extensively about the deficit of "wholesome" recreation available to girls in the cities. Like Addams and Lindner-Isreals, most women reformers came from upper and middle-class families; many were among the first generation of women in the United States to attend colleges and universities. The tenor of their reform efforts frequently reflected that socio-economic background and its attendant values and privileges.

Despite their qualifications, women activists tenuously won public careers. Overqualified for domestic or factory work, but barred from traditionally masculine trades, very few upper-class women could find suitable jobs outside the home. Social work and nursing were on the slender list of professional options.[183] And even these "nurturing" roles troubled gender expectations. Historian Elizabeth Perry points out that many women reformers justified their participation in public culture as an extension of the maternal gesture. In this way, women activists defended themselves against

[182] Anti-saloon crusades, of course, preceded the problems of the fin de siècle; in the 1870's several municipalities in the U.S. enacted legislation prohibiting the sale of liquor or saloon admittance to women under age 16.

[183] This is not to suggest that women reformers were anything but earnest in their efforts. Social work was certainly not opportunism.

accusations that work outside the home encroached on masculine territory. As Perry explains,

> "…critics called [women reformers] 'unsexed,' charging them with threatening the stability of the home. In response, women reformers justified themselves on the ground that, as mothers and homemakers, they were well suited to protect the weak and the helpless." [184]

Women activists also argued that "homemaking" offered a model for civic engagement. As Perry illustrates, many reformers insisted that state and municipal authorities likewise "should act maternally" to protect and elevate a public hurt by the "masculine" culture of industrial capitalism and its unflinching exploitations.[185] This suggestion, of course, was at odds with the traditional paternalism of state powers. The dance hall reform writings that I consider below illustrate the ways in which "maternal" intervention attempted to differ from the more prohibitive "paternal" variety. Again, many women reformers vied to make public amusements reflect the ideals of the bourgeois household: moral, orderly, sentimental and nurturing. In the dance halls, matronly social workers attempted to mother the working girl; many suggested that gentle, maternal encouragement might restore the feminine qualities eclipsed by the rigors of industrial culture.

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[184] Elisabeth I. Perry, "'The General Motherhood of the Common Wealth:' Dance Hall Reform in the Progressive Era," *American Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 5, Winter, 1985, pg. 724.

[185] Many women first became involved with reform movements in response to the "poisoned" industrial foods that had appeared in their pantries. Tainted milk and beef posed a threat to the safety of the bourgeois household, and to its children. The presence of foul, industrial products made evident that the unchecked economic expansions of a masculine public culture had run amok, and that a redeemed public required the moral interventions of women. See introduction to Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye's Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991).

Initially, urban activists encouraged young women to *leave* the city whenever possible, and especially during the summer months. Reformers in New York commissioned summer boarding houses in the Catskills, where girls could escape the drudgeries and dangers of urban life. New York's Committee on Amusements and Vacation Resources for Working Girls proposed and sponsored these programs, and city banks offered special savings plans to help accommodate expenses. I mention these retreats here because they set the precedent for the dance hall reforms that follow. Arguments about the benefits of boarding houses illustrate some of the assumptions entrenched in the dance hall reform movement. For instance, the Catskill retreats aimed to help working girls "recover" a femininity that had been supplanted by the "hard" logics of industrial capitalism. Writing for the *New York Times*, Jean Hamilton, founder of the Working Girls Clubs of Manhattan, explains that boarding houses and other wholesome recreations worked well to "combat the stern materialistic views of girls who have become hard and bitter in the struggle."

In this article, Hamilton recounts the story of a young woman who, having worked her way up from childhood factory labor to stenography, "knew nothing but the hustle." As evidence, Hamilton reports that, at the start of her retreat, the young woman refused to help with the dishes and ate extra pieces of cake every night, before the other girls had received their shares. The young woman described her philosophy, as follows: "I was taught that if I was honest, that that's all I had to do and I'd better hustle and to look out for myself. You've got to get there first. No one is going to look out for you."[1] Towards the end of her stay at the boarding house, the "tough" stenographer "began to change," cooperating with others, performing chores, and, even, conceding her cake.

Hamilton implies that the stenographer was forced by circumstance to adopt the *masculine* attitudes of an urban survivalist. Her escape from the city and exposure to a more "nurturing" environment allowed her to rediscover the "soft" character traits "more natural to her sex," feminine qualities like domesticity, collectivity, and empathy. Implicitly, the working girls' unfeminine behavior reflected a public culture dominated by the "masculine" rigors of industry and "hustle."

As I suggested in chapter one, progressive reformers attempted to redress a variety of social ills caused by the processes and effects of industrialization. For dance hall reformers and others invested in the "uplift" of the working girl, industrial culture—the conditions, values and logics associated with urban modernity and with industrial capitalism—denied working women access to an essential femininity. Dance halls and other forms of commercial recreation seemed manifest and reproduce those conditions. In one of the first studies on female juvenile delinquency, titled "The Unadjusted Girl," psychologist William I. Thomas presents a series of examples that link feminine crime to commercial recreation and to the conditions of labor. In one case, the psychologist recounts the daily life of a seventeen year old Czech immigrant working as a domestic in New Jersey. Brought up on charges of prostitution and shop lifting (stockings!), Thomas uses "Esther" to exemplify the tough attitude and trying conditions of the new feminine labor force. As evidence, he reprints excerpts of a letter from "Esther" to her best friend "Hannah":

> [March, 1915]…My lady told me everything going to be much better next winter. I going to have a nice warm room. This winter I had a awfully cold room. She didn't give me no blankets so I had to sleep in my clothes and I used to take an iron with me to warm up the bed so bad I have here. Friend, I go to school every Wednesday but this Wednesday I won't go I go to the dance. I have a white dress under the black skirt and long coat and she going to think that I go to school. I leave my skirt and my books in my friends house and I go to the dance ha ha ha. I have there lots of nice boys and the man who brings me the eggs and lots of nice young man so I going to have a nice time. Come with me, ha ha. Dear, I went Sunday out and I went to the girl and her sister have a boarding house there where nice 3 young mans and all ask me to go to the dance, so I going to have big fun. I be very glad if you can come with me but don't tell on me that I'm going to the dance. My lady she don't know anything about it. She think I an innocent girl. No. 1 I am don't you think, friend?"[186]

Thomas points out that dance halls and theaters offer "Esther" an escape from the drudgeries of domestic labor and from the evidently inhumane conditions in which she was forced to live. Like most progressives, Thomas understands gender "delinquency" as the result of environmental circumstances, rather than intrinsic to the character of the delinquent.

For many progressives, then, moral order seemed to reflect material conditions. Reformers frequently testified to the essentially good character of the working girl. The *New York Times* reports that the Committee for the Recreation and Leisure of Working Girls found the city's saloons and dance halls especially "unfair" to the otherwise pure character of the city's young women. The paper summarizes as follows,

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[186] William I. Thomas, "The Unadjusted Girl: With Case and Standpoint for Behavior Analysis," *Criminal Science Monographs,* no. 4, 1923, pg. 188.

> The iniquity of such places is that decent girls are attracted there by the dance, the freedom of coming alone, and in nearly every instance making dangerous acquaintances both among men and women, and very soon lose the attractiveness which they possessed when they first went there.[187]

Lindner-Isreals similarly implores readers with an earnest, if patronizing kind of populism: "we must recover from the idea that the public is intrinsically bad. It needs instruction in the fine art of using, not abusing, its privileges, and a little faith in the great American proletariat will develop a marvelous return."[188]

The novelty of leisure time, itself a byproduct of industrial labor, paved the way for the dance hall "madness" that erupted in most cities around the turn of the century. 1911 labor laws limited work hours for women and children, and women's trade labor, generally factory and sweatshop work, dwindled significantly during the summer months. In her famous exposé of summertime amusements, "The Way of the Girl," Lidner-Isreals writes that "the ordinary average working girl, earning five or six dollars a week, cannot possibly get away from her greatest enemy—the summer periods with nothing to do."[189] New leisure time lead to "an increase in recreation at unsavory beach resorts" like Coney Island and St. George, as well a proliferation of dance halls in the Bowery and along the west side of Manhattan. Chicago's White City likewise operated commercial dance halls, and the South Side's notorious venues attracted dancers from all over the metropolitan area. Smaller cities like San Francisco and St. Louis experienced a similar dance "craze."

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[187] "Want Law to Govern City Dance Halls," *New York Times*, January 31st, 1909, pg. 8.
[188] Belle Lindner-Isreals, "The Way of the Girl," *Survey*, July 3rd, 1909, pg. 496.
[189] Ibid.

Reformers worried about the safety *and* chastity of the young women who frequented these establishments. First, girls travelled to and from resorts unescorted, which sometimes left them vulnerable to attack. Second, the least "reputable" halls were said to tolerate or encourage licentious types of dance. Animal dances like the grizzly bear and the turkey trot (practices derived from the plantation cake walks), offended the social sensibilities of these Protestant activists. Most reserved special criticism for the working-class practice of "tough" dancing, by which couples held each other objectionably close and moved in rapid and circular motions.[190] The term "tough" seems significant here in that it, again, points to attitudes associated with urban industrial culture that reformers hoped to redress.

Finally, reformers were concerned about the copious amounts of alcohol made available in dance halls. In fact, dance hall reforms led to liquor licensing and eventually, to prohibition. Girls, however, claimed to gravitate towards the dance halls primarily for the music, rather than for the liquor or the boys.[191] Even the shoddiest dance hall or saloon provided pianist in order to attract young women, whose dancing invariably lead to thirst.[192] Drinks or "treats" offered by suitors generally sustained these establishments. One Coney Island dancing master explains: "'If you haven't got the girls, you can't do business. Keep attracting em! These fellows will come if the girls are there.'"[193] Music—ragtime, marches and sometimes waltzes—lured girls into the halls; alcohol made them

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[190] I detail dance practices in the next chapter.

[191] Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pg. 88.

[192] Ragtime arrived in the working class dancehalls and honky-tonks, before it appeared in the middle class cabarets or on Broadway. For one thing, working class halls were more often mixed race spaces, which meant that black musicians were welcome to play there. In addition, to ragtime, dancers two-stepped to popular marches, and in many cases, danced to specific "ethnic" musics—polkas for instance, or Czardas—depending on the hall.

[193] As cited in Belle Lindner-Isreals, "The Way of the Girl," *Survey*, July 3rd, 1909, pg. 487.

pliable. Thus, partnered with liquor and commercial greed, music seemed complicit in the demise of young women.

Under such circumstances, reformers worried that girls easily might fall into a life of prostitution. Dancing masters and "speilers"—men hired to give instructions, call dances, or pair partners—also were rumored to procure girls for sex-work. Lidner-Isreals explains that the speiler "is acquainted with the moral character of every girl who enters the place, and in all too many instances, he is probably responsible for it."[194] At the very least, dance halls and dance music seemed to encourage promiscuity. Lidner-Isreals writes,

> Speilers will tell you in moments of confidence that no girl comes to the dance hall night after night and remains what she was when she began coming there. You cannot dance night after night, held in the closest of sensual embraces, with every effort made in the style of dancing to appeal to the worst that is in you, and remain unshaken by it. No matter how wary and how wise a girl may be—and she has enough things in her daily life in factory and store to teach her—she is not always able to keep up the good fight.[195]

Here, Lindner-Isreals suggests that even girls made savvy by urban industrial conditions often fail to "fight" the seductions of dance music. In most instances, however, the "streetwise" woman was said to participate in a dance hall culture that might besot her "honor," precisely because she also had internalized the logics of industrial capitalism. The working girl's labor served as a kind of indoctrination in the values of commerce and exchange. Lindner-Isreals warns that girls who trade dances for "treats" eventually trade sexual favors as well. Hence, an attitude that accepted the "hustle" of industrialism made

[194] Belle Lindner-Isreals, "The Way of the Girl," *Survey*, July 3rd, 1909, pg. 495.
[195] Ibid.

young women more likely to shirk chastity in favor of a good exchange rate.[196] The director of the woman's police precinct in Manhattan, in fact, describes the working girls descent into a life of prostitution as a well-trodden route from one mode of labor to another. As she explains in the *New York Times*, "the path from regular work and later even into professional immorality is an easy one."[197]

In addition to the logics of industrial capitalism, the tedium of factory labor was said to dull both the morals and wits of the working girl, leaving her vulnerable or prone to dance hall debaucheries. In an article titled "Harder Conditions For Girl Workers: So Dance Halls Flourish," Jean Hamilton tells the *New York Times* that the monotony of factory work encourages young women to seek excitement in the dance halls. The labor, she explains, "is fatiguing, undeveloping, deadening. The speed is such that, as one skilled pieceworker told me, 'you can't think or you drop behind.'" [198] Hours of mechanical repetitions and mindless tedium, Hamilton suggests, produce intellectual and moral deficits. Thus robbed of judgment and prone to escapism, the young woman seeks out "fast" commercial amusements where, as Hamilton explains "the girl has no option with whom she dances."[199] Speilers and masters take advantage of this weakened moral condition; young men with nefarious intentions separate dull-minded girls from their friends.

Jane Addams also points to the problems of industrialism in her writings about pre-prohibition dance halls. Addams, however, argues that the dance halls offer a means

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[196] That "working girl" came to mean prostitute only further points to this conflation of feminine labor with sex.
[197] Carol Bird, "Policewomen's School," *New York Times*, July 31st, 1921, pg. 74.
[198] Anonymous, "Harder Conditions for Working Girls," *New York Times*, November 20th, 1909, pg. 8.
[199] Ibid.

to escape the social and intellectual conformity of factory labor, as well as the leveling effects of commercial consumerism. Dancing, she claims, seems to afford the young a sense of individual identity. She writes:

> All day long young people work in factories where every effort is made that they should conform to a common standard; as they walk upon the streets they make painful exertions to appear in the prevailing mode of dress to keep conventions; only in moments of recreation does their sense of individuality expand; they are then able to reveal, as at no other time, that hidden self which is so important to each of us.[200]

Addams contends that wholesome leisure activities might offer a *healthy* respite from monotonous factory labor and an increasingly monotonous culture. Addams echoes concerns common to the early century about the ways in which mass culture threatens to vanquish individualism. In this case, repetitious actions at work train for the psychic conformities of consumer capitalism For Addams, young women enter dance halls not to replicate the logics of industrialism, but to find individual self-expression outside those demands. Addams suggests that well-appointed dance halls might enable the young to find "that hidden self" beyond the conventions and conformities of industrial culture.

In addition to the tedium of factory work, cramped living conditions and inattentive parents made girls vulnerable to the vices of the dance halls. Especially during the summer months, crowded tenements pushed young women into the streets and away from protective surveillance. Lindner-Isreals exclaims: "Three rooms in a tenement, overcrowded with the younger children, make the street a private apartment. The public resort, similarly overcrowded…answers as her reception room." Without the careful

[200] Addams published this piece in 1929, but she describes the conditions that predate prohibition (Jane Addams, "A Decade of Prohibition," *The Survey*, October 1st, 1929, Vol. LXIII, No. 1, pg. 6).

partitions of the bourgeois household, the working girl must "receive" gentlemen in dance halls and on promenades. Thus, the courtship rituals usually reserved for the private middle-class parlor, leak out onto the public streets.[201] Lindner-Isreals astutely observes that, for this reason, the middle-class lady is guarded more rigorously than the working girl. She asserts that "[t]he distinction between the working woman and her more carefully guarded sister of the less driven class is one of standards, opportunities, and a chaperone."[202] For this reason, and like Jane Addams, Lindner-Isreals argues that the creation of "wholesome" entertainments for working girls is a matter of social equality. "Denial of these privileges people the underworld," she writes. "Furnishing them is modern preventive work and should be an integral part of any social program."[203]

In the conclusion to her "The Way of the Girl," Lindner-Isreals configures recreation as a public resource and necessary to the healthy development of the urban youth:

> Let us frankly recognize that youth demands amusement. When the cities begin to see their duties to the little ones, playgrounds appear. Youth plays too. Instead of sand piles, give them dance platforms; instead of slides and see-saws, theaters; instead of teachers of manual occupations, give them the socializing force of contact with good supervising men and women…Progress from the playground to the rational amusement park.[204]

Here, public recreation works in the service of progress by socializing the young, supporting their development—from playground to dance hall—and providing role

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[201] Again, much of the discourse about the problems of industrial modernity, and with ragtime and jazz music and dance culture, involve the dissolution of the boundaries that once separated public from private culture.
[202] The Way of the Girl," *Survey*, July 3rd, 1909, pg. 486.
[203] Ibid., pg. 497.
[204] "The Way of the Girl," *Survey*, July 3rd, 1909, pg. 497.

models and monitors ("good supervising men and women") of a presumably "higher" class. Moreover, municipal recreation offers "rational amusement," orderly entertainments that better serve collective social goals and, in turn, make for a more rational and ordered city. In other words, Lindner-Isreals imagines that dance hall reforms might help to recuperate progress by operating as a counterbalance to the objectionable effects of industrial culture. Instead of a "dance mad" town filled with prostitutes and gangsters, Linder-Isreals envisions public amusements by which workings girls are afforded the same social "opportunities" as women "of the less driven" class.

Jean Hamilton similarly argues that girls gravitate towards dance halls in part because they cannot meet or entertain men elsewhere. Because of the crowded tenement conditions "'it may be said that the girl has no thought of entertaining at home.'" [205] Again, whereas middle and upper-class women might entertain in the parlor (with a sonata) and under supervision, the working girl's home life affords no such opportunity. [206] Hamilton likewise understands the absence of "wholesome" recreation as one of the grave inequalities suffered by her "less fortunate sisters." In a lecture on the plight of the working girl, Hamilton links the women's movement to issues of labor and leisure, and thus imagines dance hall reform as a move toward *gender* equality: "We commonly say that America offers more to womanhood than any other country. On what are we basing

[205] To emphasize that point, Hamilton referred to a diagram of the "typical tenement building" and told the audience that "the five room flat was in all 36 feet by 25 feet, excluding the deep air shaft, and the three room tenement is in use more than any other." (*New York Times*, Nov. 20th, 1909, pg. 4.)

[206] Phillip Yarrow of Chicago's Vigilance Society reiterated the same concern in 1923: "The working girl has no place in which to entertain her sweet heart. Every street corner in Chicago is a parlor. Every dance hall is a parlor. Every cheap hotel is a parlor." Yarrow here traces the steps of feminine debauchery through the city, as imagined by numerous anti-vice crusaders and a sometimes panicked public; unsupervised girls moved from the street corner, to the dance hall, and then to a cheap hotel and, presumably, into a life of prostitution. ("Love Parlor in Churches Urged to Save Girls," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 1st, 1923, pg. 3).

this statement? Do we not make the mistake of taking certain women in certain fields and calling their situation and opportunity common?"[207] Hamilton suggests that genuine social progress—a matter of national pride—requires the extension of middle-class opportunities to working women as well. Significantly, those opportunities include spaces in which to be courted properly and in which to learn behaviors more "natural to her sex."

The Maternal Public

In the absence of private spaces and vigilant families, progressive reformers hoped to make dance halls function like bourgeois parlors, and dance hall hostesses like surrogate mothers. Reformers vied for and successfully commissioned a number of municipal halls in New York, Chicago and scattered smaller cities around the country. Judge Jean Norris of New York's women's court declared that the lax supervision of immigrants necessitated this type of municipal intervention. The *New York Times* reports his arguments, as follows:

> In looking into the evil [of the dance hall] we must not forget the home conditions under which many of these girls live. Parents cease to exercise their authority as soon as son and daughter become wage earners and the young people break away from all ties. It is the city's duty to protect its boys and girls. For this reason, I advocate municipal dance halls.[208]

The editors at *The Survey* similarly claim that city sponsored dance halls might work to service "large numbers of young people working in industrial centers away from parents

[207] "Harder Conditions for Working Girls," *New York Times*, Nov. 20th, 1909, pg. 4.
[208] "Women Launch Crusade for Better Dance Halls," *New York Times*, March 16th, 1924, pg. xx9.

and childhood friends, and many city boys and girls whose parents, through their poverty or ignorance, make no provision for the social needs of their children."[209] Lindner-Isreals even suggests that citywide parental love might eradicate dance hall vice altogether. "There would be fewer prostitutes and fewer gangsters," she writes, "if the young people of New York knew that some one cared about them."[210]

Settlement houses already operated as social service centers and model tenements. Reformers hoped that the city's dance halls might serve similar functions. Articles in *The New York Times* made these municipal halls appear orderly and effective. One headline declares: "East Siders Like Model Dance Hall; Popularity of Experiment Shows That the Young Folks Prefer Wholesome Amusements." *The Times* assures readers that young dancers "don't know they are experimental subjects."[211] Evidently, however, the experiment confirms progressive assumptions about the character of urban youth and the efficacy of "rational" reforms: essentially good-natured, moral and "wholesome," boys and girls want only for proper instruction.

The paper reports that "on Saturday night at least 200 young folks can be seen disporting themselves, untroubled by the knowledge that they are being 'uplifted.'" "Soft drinks," a coat check and a thorough frisking for weapons, convince this reporter that in the municipal dance hall "the outward signs of spiritual grace begin to manifest themselves." To the writer's obvious delight, strict rules for dancing are upheld. The model hall tolerates neither "fast" nor "conspicuous" dance moves; the "spieler" yells at

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[209] "Reform, Don't Abolish Dance Halls," October 15th, 1929, pg. 90.
[210] "Women Launch Crusade for Better Dance Halls," *New York Times*, March 16th, 1924, pg. xx9.
[211] Anonymous"Eastsiders Like Model Dance Hall," *New York Times*, February 6th, 1910, pg. 8.

one young man "who had the audacity to rest his head on a partner's shoulder."[212] Further, *The Times* lauds the visibility afforded by the new municipal hall. The reporter suggests that open air architecture and bright lights make for better supervision and encourage moral comportment otherwise absent from the deliberately darkened spaces of commercial halls.[213]

With judges, policeman and other instruments of municipal authority cast as fathers, reformers imagined hostesses and inspectors (often themselves) as mothers. Maria Ward Lambin, who also led the campaign to eradicate San Francisco's infamous Barbary Coast vice-district[214] tells the *New York Times* that "the women chosen" to hostess at the newly established municipal halls in the bay area "were of a motherly type." Here, Lambin offers a definition of "motherly," that points to traditional qualities like selflessness and empathy. The dance hall hostesses, she explains "are women who went into their work heart and soul, not for what they were going to get out of it, but for what they were going to give." Lambin suggests that gentle and maternal altruism makes obstinate youth receptive to advice. She explains that, after the new municipal dance hall introduced its hostesses "the boys and girls recognized the fact that the women had come not to censure but to counsel and befriend." [215] Her descriptions of the transformative effects of a matronly presence on public life certainly suggest an alternative to the

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[212] Ibid.

[213] Lidner-Isreals suggested more than once that the city of New York should invest in "open air pavilions" and other visible recreation centers. The city's building and parks commissioners responded with proposals to "establish dancing platforms in public and recreation parks under proper supervision" ("The Way of the Girl," *Survey*, July 3rd, 1909, pg. 497).

[214] The *New York Times* reporter describes the process as follows: "the vice clean up was led entirely by women who went quietly about their task and when they had collected data and were ready to present a strong case, they took it up with the commissioner…[who] saw the wisdom in the proposal and acquiesced." "Women Launch Crusade for Better Dance Halls," March 16th, 1924, pg. xx9.

[215] Ibid.

prohibitive (and ocular) paternalism of Phillip Yarrow's Vigilance Society, or to the recommendations of Judge McAdoo, cited in the previous chapter. (McAdoo, of course, claimed that the absence of prohibitions—the spared "rod"—made for feminine delinquency.) Lambin and other women reformers offered maternal "counsel," as a solution to the dance hall problem.[216]

In her article on "Dance Hall Dangers," Chicago "recreational specialist" Ella Gardner describes municipal dance halls as spaces in which hired "hostesses" and well-intended proprietors act like extended family. Gardner begins by assuring readers that dance hall reform qualifies as an urgent social issue, precisely because municipal halls give counsel to the needy working classes: "there *are* people who know that the public dance hall is a place of importance—the dance hall hostess who listens nightly to the woes and joys of her regular patrons, knows that her hall is a place where sympathetic advice is sought, and sometimes obtained." Here, again, the ideal public dance hall provides social services to the young; proprietors act in parental and supervisory roles. Gardner reports that the manager "beamed with pride" whenever patrons greeted him by name. The hostess—evidently, also the manager's sister—treats dancers like "members of her own family." Moreover, Gardner testifies that this particular hall provides its patrons with certain domestic accoutrement presumably absent from working-class homes. In the men's bathroom, for instance, the hostess stocks "razors, an abundance of soap and towels," and in the coat room, a "collection of collars and ties." Similarly, in the ladies room, Gardner finds "a curling iron, powder and odd bits of finery…" The

[216] LeRoy E Bowman and Maria Ward Lambin published "Evidence of Social Relations as Seen in Types of New York City Dance Halls," (*Journal of Social Forces*, v. 3 n. 2, January, 1925, pg. 290). In this essay, the social scientists map the city with dance halls as markers of social differences. Their research is cited elsewhere and seems to set off a vigorous public debate about regulating these spaces.

hostess explains—and in a way that pronounces the bourgeois conflation of cleanliness with morality—that toiletries promote moral behavior. She tells Gardner: "'they [the dancers] act different when they feel they look right.'"[217] Indeed, the dance hall works in this case to extend not only the bourgeois parlor, but the powder room as well.

If the functions of the parlor *and* toilet might move into the public sphere, then so could the middle-class matron. Early dance hall reformers like Gardner, Addams and Lindner- Isreals also petitioned legislatures and city officials to appoint matronly dance hall inspectors. These women, they argued, would act as liaisons between commercial proprietors and the municipality. Ella Gardner's essay on "Dance Hall Dangers" also provides an excellent illustration of the role as imagined by early reformers. Here, Gardner offers what she calls a "composite picture," a fictional image of a dance hall inspector. Gardner describes this character in the present tense: "she is a woman between forty and fifty years of age, physically strong and fearless, a trained social worker with a persuasive way." Curiously endowed with diplomatic and gladiatorial qualities, the woman inspector as Gardner imagines her works tirelessly to safeguard community interests. In this scenario, the inspector reviews applications for dance hall licenses and, as Gardner reports, "ruthlessly weeds out men whose records are questionable." Gardner's fictional character vocalizes concerns that point to progressive reformers' distrust of commercial capitalism. "She" claims that some applicants "are simply interested in the money they can make and don't care at all whether the dances are well run, for they will probably never come back this way."[218]

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[217] Ella Gardner, "Dance Hall Dangers" *Journal of Social Hygiene*, vol. xvi. no. 1, 1930, pgs. 10-11.
[218] Ibid., pg. 11.

Significantly, Gardner's story insists that women who work for the social good are admired for their unique wisdom and expertise. Like Lambin, Gardner clearly vies to make the qualities associated with the middle-class matron—qualities once contained to the private sphere—useful and even necessary to the proper maintenance of public life. She describes an "interview process" with a potential dance hall hostess, again, through the voice of her fictional inspector:

> "Oh yes," she says," the managers pay them but they are glad to have me select them. I know women better and get the ones who last. The men aren't anxious to have their hostesses change often. A woman builds up quite a following at a hall." After the assignment is made, she smiles at the new worker and says, "I'll be around often to see you and if I can be of any help, just let me hear from you." The very welcome she receives is proof that her visits are not looked upon as an imposition by the manager or his staff.[219]

Gardner's fantasy of the perfect dance hall matron articulates (almost painfully) the ways in which many upper and middle-class women seemed to pine for culturally legitimated and *appreciated* public careers. Evidently, Gardner is compelled to explain that the dance hall inspector's visits "are not looked upon as an imposition by the manager or his staff." Moreover, this vision of women's special position and contribution to public culture clearly counters the adoption of "masculine" behaviors associated with the working girl, and manifest in her dance hall comportment.

In addition to creating professional roles like dance hall hostess or inspector, recreation reforms also afforded some women a way to inhabit and reinvent masculine professions. In Manhattan, the vice associated with dance halls, particularly with run-

[219] Carol Bird, "Policewomen's School," *New York Times*, July 31st, 1921, pg. 74.

away girls and prostitutes (often the same girls), justified women's entry into law enforcement. In 1921, the director of the new women's police precinct told the *New York Times* that "'the dance hall is the police woman's domain, for it is possible for her to mingle with the crowd, unnoticed and detect any subtle, bad influences." Further, the inspector argues that, without uniforms or masculine prerogatives, the police women make better dance hall detectives. She carefully distinguishes policewomen from policemen, as follows: "The work of the policewoman may be classified as protective, preventive and corrective. Of these, the most important is the protective work especially as it concerns children, girls, dance halls, cabaret and moving picture shows."[220] Here, the inspector assures readers that the new police force performs tasks specific to gender, and that policewomen's work avoids encroaching on masculine territory. Moreover, the director argues that women's essential morality legitimates her disciplinary authority. "Women," she claims, "must possess not only physical and mental abilities for their jobs as policewomen, but they must bring to them the spiritual qualities which are indispensable."[221] Here, women's morality (imagine a policeman lauded for his "spiritual qualities") justifies her incursion on masculine roles and her presence in public culture.

Nancy Cott explains in *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, that those who hitched "women's rights to the agenda of social reform frequently weighted the end of the see-saw stressing women's gender differences from men…[and] women's duties owed and services to be offered to society."[222] As I suggested in the previous section, dance hall reformers configured the deficit in "wholesome" recreation as a question of

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[220] Carol Bird, "Policewomen's School," *New York Times*, July 31st, 1921, pg. 74.
[221] "Women's Police School," *New York Times*, July 31st, 1921, pg. 74.
[222] Nancy F. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pg. 21.

social justice and gender equality. In this section, I argued that women activists offered the public their "feminine" skills and qualities as moral anecdotes to the iniquities of (an implicitly masculine) industrial culture. Dance hall reforms, then, became one of the spaces in which women activists attempted to reconfigure the public sphere in the image of the bourgeois household. In this way, dance hall reforms contribute to debates about women's participation in public culture, and the ways in which that participation fit within the project of progress. While the Evangelical reformers described in the last chapter linked progress to traditional gender roles and to a separation of public and private spheres, women reformers clearly believed that a public infusion of what Elizabeth Perry calls "bourgeois mother love" might work to recuperate progress derailed by industrialism.

White, middle and upper-class dance hall reforms, however, competed for influence, against black and working-class music and dance cultures. In the next section, I suggest, they also competed for control over public spaces.

Promiscuous Space

Progressive labor reforms helped to create new leisure time and inadvertently paved the way for debauched forms of commercial entertainment. Similarly, dance hall reforms led to prohibition, which invited the creation of "closed"[223] dance halls that moved into the recesses of the city, away from the watchful eye and socializing efforts of reformers. Prohibition only exacerbated the problems associated with the dance halls. In the hidden spaces of cities, gangsters more effectively peddled bootleg liquor and

[223] "Closed" dance halls required passwords, cards or some other form of entry because they sold alcohol. I have never seen the term "speakeasy" used in the popular press.

prostitutes. As New York's Women's Police Chief explains to one reporter, closed dance halls defied municipal efforts: "we can't regulate them. We haven't the numbers. We haven't the power. We can't even get into them."[224]

Music and dance moved underground and, to the chagrin of many reformers, white middle and upper-class girls began to follow. Throughout the 1920's, *The Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *New York Times* spread panic about the dangers that the city's dance halls posed to white middle and upper-class women.[225] Concerns about the jazz dance halls certainly echo earlier complaints about the dangers that ragtime halls posed for the "working girl." According to these sources, unescorted girls walking the city streets or riding in cars to and from dances risked abduction and attack. The *Tribune* reports that judges on Chicago's notorious south side and the city's police chief vowed to end a rash of "statutory offenses." Apparently, several young women at the Midway Gardens dance hall were forced into a stolen automobile and driven to a remote prairie beneath the south side neighborhood.[226]

In this case, the *Tribune* describes the attacks with phrases like "serious charges" and "statutory offenses," which evade the term rape but place blame squarely on the offending attackers. In other instances, however, abductions and assaults were understood as the consequence of women's new urban mobility. The same year, the *Tribune* reports

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[224] John B. Kennedy, "The Devil's Dance Dens," *Collier's,* September 19th, 1925, pg. 12.

[225] Perhaps for the influence of Phillip Yarrow's Vigilance Society, or perhaps, as the headquarters of notorious mobsters, the *Chicago Tribune* was especially panicked about the dangers of the dance halls during the 1920's. For instance, the paper described in gruesome detail and on the front page the collapse of a "chop suey" parlor in Boston ("Dance Hall Ruins Yield Bodies of 39," July 6th, 1925, pg. 13) and reported that one dance hall in Chicago's East Side had incubated a small pox outbreak. Evidently, doctors surrounded and quarantined the Kluda Hall, a favorite of Eastern European immigrants. There, the *Tribune* reports, twenty cases of small pox were found, confirming or, perhaps, literalizing the cultural fear that jazz operated like a contagion to which working class immigrants seemed especially susceptible.

[226] "Try to Attack Girls They Met at Dance Hall," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* June 9th, 1925, pg. 16.

that two "dance hall romances nearly ended disastrously" when a pair of girls, eighteen and nineteen years old, similarly were offered a ride home by their dancing partners, only to find themselves at gun point in the same south side prairie.[227] Unlike the first article, however, the *Tribune's* description of the attacks, as failed "romances," trivialize the assaults and render the girls vaguely culpable. Moreover, it points to popular assumptions that women who frequented dance halls invited assaults. Now even middle-class women seemed to be "on the make," hustling for drinks, rides, gifts or jobs and, like working girls, akin to the prostitute.

In other instances the upper-class girl is configured as the naïve, overconfident victim of the urban underground. Another article in the *Chicago Tribune* marks the trajectory of an assault and kidnapping with bold and alarming text: WENT TO DANCE HALL; LURED FROM DANCE HALL; FOUND WITH MOTORISTS; GIRL TAKEN HOME. The paper points out that this time the girl in question, fifteen year old Azalia Anderson, was the daughter of a well-known and wealthy "west side manufacturer." The paper describes Azalia's kidnapping as follows:

> On the night she disappeared, the girl said, she went to a dance hall in Cicero. There she met Hayes, with whom she danced. He persuaded her to go home with him. White was there when they arrived. The men kept her a virtual prisoner, the girl said, and invited their friends to call at the apartment. 'I had a good home life,' she sobbed, 'but I ran away to see something different.'[228]

[227] Ibid.
[228] "Two Girls Saved From Kidnappers; 5 Men Are Held," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 8th, 1923, pg. 6.

The *Tribune* article demonstrates—with a certain noticeable *schadenfreude*—that class privilege offers no protection to girls who dance in the city at night or take rides from strangers. In this case, her "downfall," is clearly the result of feminine hubris. "Running away" for a night and mingling with something "different," clearly oversteps the bounds of domestic containment. Dancing, drinking and meeting men at halls—that is, behaving like a working girl—obviously violates the expectations of the class. Panicked stories about attacks on otherwise "respectable" girls, also clearly articulate misgivings about the new mobility and autonomy, once monopolized by the working-girl, and now extended to the middle and upper-class women.

In addition to the problem of middle and upper-class debaucheries, the new dance hall culture created spaces that defied the logics of urban reform, and its attempts to create "rational" and "wholesome" public amusements. Mainly, it seemed to do so by dissolving the social partitions meant to regulate social order. In their survey of Manhattan dance halls published in the *Journal of Social Forces*, progressive reformers Maria Lambin and LeRoy Bowman report that the taxi dances[229], or pay-per-dance halls, attract the most socially outcast of men. Again, these reformers suggest that the "commercialism" of the taxi halls seems especially loathsome, for it perpetuates the "tough" logics of industry. Lambin and Bowman report, however, that few women in this study appear to have "the ear marks of the hardened prostitute." Most of the taxi dance girls in New York work in factories during the day and seem "generally hard-working and honest." The dangers of the taxi hall involve the character of men in

[229] Taxi halls predate Prohibition, but appear in abundance afterward. In the taxi hall, girls are hired to dance with men for a cut of the ticket sales.

attendance, rather than the girls with whom they danced. Here, taxi hall patrons appear foreign, ugly and inept:

> In the closed halls the man without a country or home, without much hope of an introduction to a lady, or perhaps with too great bashfulness to seek one, can buy his sociability, poor as it is, by the evening. He can also select from what choice there is, of the women provided for him, and find in the commercialism of the affair, a control over his partner that longer acquaintance, better understanding and perhaps more finesse, secures for the more fortunate male of more numerous social ties.[230]

Lambin and Bowman seem to suggest that closed halls offer the guise of romantic opportunity to the desperate and desperately unworthy; pathetic foreigners momentarily muster a kind of "control" over women, authority otherwise afforded only to "more fortunate" men. In addition to their lack of "finesse" or "social ties," the gentlemen who frequent closed halls are "factory workers or poorer paid clerks," destitute and barely intelligible. Moreover, Lambin and Bowman's complaints about the patrons of the closed hall clearly articulate anxiety *and* disgust with the possibility of racial miscegenation afforded by new and "invisible" urban spaces:

> Closed halls are patronized almost exclusively by Orientals—Filipinos, Japanese and Chinese—white girls being employed to dance with them. The patrons seem to be for the most part unattractive boys who would not be welcome in the larger halls and could not compete with the attractive and well groomed boys who frequent the palaces. In the closed halls it was noted that the patrons were chiefly first generation foreign boys who did not speak the English language very well…the closed hall seems to attract boys who are too unattractive, or too inexperienced socially to feel at ease in the large, handsome ball rooms.[231]

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[230] *Journal of Social Forces*, vol. 3 no.2, January 1925, pg. 290.
[231] Ibid.

Here, the reformers' language seems meant to render the "Oriental" man sexually innocuous. Wealthier, better "groomed," implicitly native born white men need not fear competition from these "foreigners." Moreover, the authors here preserve the most visible spaces of the city for the middle and upper-classes, and for the native born. The "large, handsome ballrooms" (which might also double as a description, converse to that of the "Orientals," of the men in attendance) and the ladies who dance there belong exclusively to men with privilege, good looks and "social ties."[232]

Most recreation reformers were adamantly opposed to these types of places.[233] These private or "closed" halls, present before Prohibition, and particularly abundant after, transformed recreation into another mode of labor. At these "taxi" halls, young women were employed to dance indiscriminately with male patrons for a cut of the ticket prices. Even at the miserable common rate—five to six cents per song—girls often made more dancing than they did in the factories. The *New York Times*, for instance, called them the "sweat shops of the dancing world," and one investigator lamented that in taxi halls "poor young things" had been "superficially hardened" by exposure to the city's dank underground. She explains that taxi hall girls "adopt a tough exterior as a defense."[234] Reformers warned that taxi halls certainly invited prostitution, given that the girls'

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[232] *New York Times* similarly reported that at the closed halls, "male patrons are described as of a low order, including many orientals," ("Women Launch Crusade For Better Dance Halls," March 16th, 1924, pg. xx9.). For further discussion of the dance hall "yellow scare" see Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar, "White Trash' Meets the `Little Brown Monkeys': The Taxi Dance Hall as a Site of Interracial…"*Amerasia Journal*, 1998, Vol. 24 Issue 2, pgs. 115-135.

[233] For instance, in their "Evidences of Social Types as Seen in New York City Dance Halls," Maria Lambin and LeRoy Bowman report that most dance halls operate well as community resources, or have the potential to do so. The taxi hall, however, they emphatically insist should be closed. (*Journal of Social Forces*, vol. 3 no.2, January 1925, pgs. 286-291).

[234] "Women Launch Crusade for Better Dance Halls," *New York Times*, March 16th, 1924, pg. xx9.

physical services already were exchanged for cash. Unlike commercial halls where girls exchanged dances for "treats," the dance-for-cash economy of the taxi halls was overt. Worse yet, most of these halls operated in secret, invisible to investigators and law enforcement—outside the "socializing" surveillance that a visually ordered and "rational" public meant to afford.

Articles about the dangers of theses dance halls also express white, middle and upper- class anxieties about the increasingly heterogeneous crowds in the cities. In the spirit of muckraking journalism, popular exposés of urban dance halls suggest that, beneath or behind the urban façade, African-Americans, Latinos, Asians and recent European immigrants secretly control the spaces of the city. These concerns echo the complaints about jazz *music* described in the previous chapter. In this case, discourse about the dangers of invisible jazz cabarets recast the paranoid and guilty projections of a post-colonial nation: "savages" lurk in the recesses of urban modernity.[235] Here, "savages" lurk in the architecture of the city.

Collier's Magazine published a series of essays on the dance hall, the first and most poignant of which was John B. Kennedy's "The Devil's Dance Dens." (The editors encourage readers to "read it and write your own moral.") Like the dance hall reformers mentioned above, Kennedy suggests that dance halls encourage and enact the logics of industrial capitalism in objectionable or immoral ways. Kennedy claims that in the "open" taxi dance halls, those visible to the public, girls demonstrate social maladies common to the "modern" industrial era. Once again, "hardened" by the conditions of industrialism, taxi hall girls transform feminine charm into one of consumer capitalism's

[235] These projections appear in films like D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* and, I would argue, *King Kong*.

most grotesque clichés: "Minnie and the others smiled with lips, teeth, eyes, cold smiles beneath the rouge—*cash register smiles.*" Here, feminine artifice functions exactly like industrial machinery.[236] The "cash register smile" also conjures popular images of the "hardened" prostitute's sinister grin. Here, Kennedy, too, equates feminine labor with prostitution. "Minnie" does the math for this reporter. "Eighteen a week for seven hour days in an office," she reports, "or thirty hours a week for five hours a night dancing." Kennedy asserts, somewhat dubiously, that "the job isn't fatiguing, isn't always unpleasant…" and he sympathizes with the working girl's desire to supplement her income. [237]

Kennedy finds the atmosphere in the closed taxi halls even more disturbing. "Here were the factory girls," he writes, "the twelve a week kind, young but hardening." Once again, jazz functions in this space as an intoxicant, a contagion, and a co-conspirator. Kennedy writes that "the trade of the taxi girl is plied in the bright light centers, where jazz bands smite the air…" Moreover, he suggests that this airborne contaminant threatens to turn dancers into an indistinct crowd. Kennedy reports that when "the band blared 'what'll I do,' the mass on the floor melts into motion." [238] In fact, his description of the "mass" on the floor presages his complaints about the

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[236] John Kennedy, "The Devil's Dance Dens," *Colliers*, September 19th, 1925, pg. 12. Also, in the age of advertising, feminine artifice often was bemoaned as a visual symptom of the power of advertising and the decline of "higher" culture. See Angela J. Latham, Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920's, London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000.

[237] John Kennedy, "The Devil's Dance Dens," *Colliers*, September 19th, 1925, pg. 51.

[238] In his Male Fantasies, Vol. 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History (trans. Stephen Conway, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987) Klaus Theweliet describes the ways in which the "masses" were configured as a corrosive diseased and dangerously feminine in the fascist, paternal imaginary of Weimar and Nazi Germany. And of course, as Andreas Huyssen points out, that the"masses," or exposure to them, threatens the ego-boundaries necessary to the normative—masculine, white, upper class, etc—subject. This "melting" into the masses articulates, perhaps, a paranoid fantasy attached to the euphemistic American "melting pot." Moreover, if music—via the ear ala Derrida-- stages "a confrontation with otherness," then jazz here acts as an emulsifier to the diverse population.

outrageous racial and ethnic mixing that often took place in the least visible halls. Kennedy reports with some horror that, in secret spaces scattered throughout the bowery, Asian men dance with women from Southern and Eastern Europe. These closed halls seemed to evade the watchful eye of the dance hall inspector. Perhaps out of legal and social necessity, dance halls that catered to Asian men were especially well-hidden. Kennedy reveals to the reader, however: "You'll find them in the thick centers of population, catering to racial groups—including Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos."[239] Hence, the closed hall seems to offer the dangerous possibility of *disappearing* into a distinctly racial crowd, in this case, a "thick center" of Asian immigrants.

Next, Kennedy's article offers readers a titillating tour through the city's "black and tan" clubs. In "that other kind of hall," he reports, "you find men of all sorts and all colors, from tan to permanent black." The "black and tan" clubs especially disturbed dance hall activists, who argued that such establishments were beyond redemption, and should be "eliminated" altogether. In fact "black and tan" clubs" had the very worst reputation among progressive reformers. One policewoman from Washington D.C. tells the *Chicago Tribune*, that "the worst cabaret" she has ever seen was "a black and tan club in Chicago's South Side."[240] There, she explains, black and white men and women smoke, drink and "pett,"— "all together"—on the dance floor. [241]

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[239] John Kennedy, "The Devil's Dance Dens," *Colliers*, September 19th, 1925, pg. 51.
[240] "Chicago Not so Wicked, Is View of Policewoman," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 24th, 1923, pg. 2.
[241] That reputation even preceded the jazz age. While early dance hall reform writings rarely make reference to mixed race crowds, Belle Lidner-Isreals briefly mentions one such dance hall, in her "Way of the Girl." In this instance, she describes one dance hall on Manhattan's North Beach as one of the worst "moral offenders" for its liquor and its prostitutes. "The place," she writes, "is frequented by an ill paid class of working girls, *white and black*" (pg. 489). Although they were not called "black and tans," halls that allowed white and black men and women to intermingled always were considered some of the debauched spaces.

Like the closed Asian halls, these black and tan clubs seemed to hide within the recesses of the city. Descriptions of these halls also point to anxieties about the ways in which urban spaces seemed to cede themselves to the "underworld" and by extension to non-whites and to immigrants. For instance, Kennedy describes an illegal, closed hall hidden on the second floor of a tenement in the bowery. He recounts his discovery of the mysterious space in a way that echoes early century anthropological literature (or perhaps, the newly born detective novel). In other words, he discovers distinctly foreign territory in his native city: "Up two flights. Press a button at a locked door and an eyehole opens. My companion was a Columbian boy of dark complexion, with a card from a well-known 'patron' of the club. We were admitted."[242] Entry required a "native" guide whose "dark Columbian" looks gave him access to the ubiquitous but invisible underground. Moreover, the "eyehole" reverses the investigators gaze; the inhabitants of these spaces, while obscure to the white, middle-class reader, *watch from the inside*.[243] This suggests that groups forced to live in the social and economic margins of the city had acquired a visual command of urban space now lost to journalists and reformers.[244]

Even that hall, with its peep holes and heavy petting fail to rattle this reporter. "There are places definitely worse," Kennedy asserts. Another description, of a closed black and tan club in Harlem, well-illustrates dominant cultural assumptions about the "worst" sort of urban space. Here, Kennedy reiterates anxieties about a city lost to a specifically black underworld:

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[242] John Kennedy, "The Devil's Dance Dens," *Colliers*, September 19th, 1925, pg. 51.
[243] Shelley Stamp Lindsey, in her essay on white slave trade films, illustrates that early century pop literature is filled with images of "white slavers" or "cadets" ominously watching their oblivious women from shadows. In this case as well, the urban vice remains invisible but omniscient ("Is Any Girl Safe?: Female Spectators at the White Slave Trade Films," in *Screen*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1996, pgs. 1-15.
[244] John Kennedy, "The Devil's Dance Dens," *Colliers*, September 19th, 1925, pg. 51.

> To this one the password was 'Sweetheart,' whispered to a large Negro who wore a red carnation. Lolling against the display case in a cigar store, he heard the password, glinted suspiciously, collected a dollar and jerked a thumb toward a telephone booth. I protested that I wanted neither to phone nor to drink. 'Push the back of the booth,' he directed. Pushed, the booth back opened into a large, windowless room with a sealed skylight. Through layers of smoke every conceivable tint of human face turned toward me.[245]

Again, descriptions of the invisible dance halls in the city's underworld articulate concerns about which groups effectively control urban space and, by extension, public culture. In 1925, journalist Mary Ross published an exposé in the *New York Times* about the startling economic and social power of the "Negro City in Harlem." "According to all popular legends," Ross claims, "those negroes who were earning big money for the first time in their lives should have spent it all on silk shirts and white buckskin shoes. But they did no such thing. They bought real estate." [246] Ross pronounces with a tone of deferential awe what in other instances reads more clearly like *panic*. Anxious descriptions of the jazz dance hall also vocalize alarm about the economic and cultural power of African-Americans at the peak of Northern migration, particularly in Harlem and Chicago's South Side. Ross' article, in fact, opens with an image of a jazz cabaret, iconic and curiously violent:

> Black fingers whipping furiously over white keys, beating out cascades of jazz; black bodies swaying rhythmically as their owners blow or beat or pluck the grotesque instruments of the band; on the dancing floor throngs, black and white, gliding, halting, swinging back madly in time to the music—this is the Harlem of cabarets, jazz capital of the world.[247]

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[245] Ibid.
[246] "Negro City In Harlem is Race Capital," *New York Times*, March 1st, 1925, pg. 39.
[247] Ibid.

One investigator for the *Chicago Tribune* similarly describes a night at the Pekin Cafe after prohibition, and after Al Capone's gang had seized control. The night of its reopening, the investigator reports that "the Pekin is still the Pekin of years ago, only more so." His article opens with this barrage of alliteration, which seems meant to illustrate the alchemical madness of mixed race crowds, liquor and jazz: "Lawless liquor, sensuous shimmy, solicitous sirens, wrangling waiters, all the tints of the racial rainbow dancing, drinking, singing at the Pekin Café, early Sunday morning."[248] He ushers the reader into this invisible space, marked only by a red lamp on the street, with familiar language: "halfway up the stairs was a door with a peephole which framed a chocolate eye." Again, the secret "peephole" suggests that visual command of the city now belongs to the urban masses, and in this case, to African-American "sentries." Inside, the investigator explains that "the big brown man asked to see the card of admittance." Under a banner headline "black and tan and white," the journalist recounts the dance floor scene as follows:

> In came a mighty black man with two white girls. A scarred white man entered with three girls, two young and painted, the other merely painted. Two fur coated 'high yaller' girls romped up with a slender white man…Meanwhile, a syncopating man had been vamping cotton field blues on the piano. A brown girl sang. 'I'll take mos' any kind of a chance,' she screamed. Then she shimmied. A dollar turned a shimmy into a muscle dance that put the old time 'hootch' to shame. Two black boys moaned and screamed on saxophone and clarinet.[249]

[248] Investigator K, "'Lid' a Joke as Pekin Shimmies Defiance of Law— Liquor, Siren, Jazz, Race Rainbow Riot in Café," Chicago Daily Tribune, February 19th, 1920, pg. 29.
[249] Ibid. pg. 29.

Here, the underground café substantiates fears about the possibility of miscegenation, as well as the existence of a public culture both invisible and disorderly. Moreover, the cacophony at the Pekin, the various screams and moans, seem not only to punctuate the "Rainbow Riot" of inter-mingling, but to produce it.

After Prohibition, underground clubs and cafés often catered to moneyed white audiences, middle and upper class patrons who went "slumming" for adventure and for booze. Hence, places like the Pekin served increasingly promiscuous crowds and bootleg liquor lubricated social relations. Even prior to prohibition, however, Chicago's South Side supported numerous "black and tan" clubs that offered jazz dancing and other entertainments. The Pekin Café once had functioned as a kind of community center for the South Side neighborhood. Its offerings attracted white audiences as well, and Jane Addams once wrote in support of the café's African American owners. The Pekin also was emblematic of the South Side's growing economic and cultural power. Historian William Kenney points out that South Side jazz was, "deeply woven into the fabric of economic and political activities designed to improve the standard of living and the political power of the black community."[250]

Attacks on jazz cafés, on clubs in Harlem and Chicago's South Side, obviously express white unease about the novel economic and cultural capital of African American neighborhoods. As Kenney reports, during the peak of Northern Migration—between 1917 and 1920—the *Chicago Tribune* frequently complained about the "incoming hordes of negroes" who settled in the South Side. This language, of course, makes clear that some white critics understood African-American mobility as a threat to civic and urban

[250] William Howland Kenney, Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, pg. 5.

stability. Similarly, the sort of shock expressed by Mary Ross of the *New York Times*, that black money bought urban real estate, illustrates overtly what articles about "closed" dance halls suggest: the spaces of the Northern cities no longer belonged exclusively to the white upper-classes.[251]

Conclusion

Women reformers attempted to redress the unsavory conditions of industrial modernity—and hence, to recuperate "progress"—through a variety of urban planning projects, including recreation reforms. Dance hall activists argued that industrial culture made working girls vulnerable to the vices of the city. Commercial dance halls seemed to enact and reproduce the logics of industry and commercial capitalism, which many women progressives associated, implicitly, with a masculine public culture. Hence, dance hall activists hoped to improve the lives of urban women, and to extend the values and functions of the bourgeois household. The dance hall controversy, in fact, was a debate about the character and quality of modern, American cities, and about women's contested participation in that public culture.

Closed halls, black and tan clubs and taxi halls, defied the logics of urban planning and progressive recreation reforms. Not only did recreation reforms fail to "socialize" the working girl, white upper and middle-class women began to adopt the recreational practices of black and working-class cultures. This performative transfusion was said to take place in the hidden spaces of the urban scene, behind tenement doors with commanding peep holes, from secret passageways in the backs of phone booths, in Chinatown and the Bowery, where "the mass on the dance floor melts into motion." In

[251] Ibid., pg. 17.

the next chapter, I illustrate the ways in which dance practices—gestures, postures and ways of moving through space—further dissolved the rigid socio-spatial boundaries that had marked the previous century. Many of the same reformers mentioned here turned their attentions to the types of dance that seemed to reflect novel social relations.

Modern Dancing

Introduction

"All ages, and all sizes and all creeds and peoples have some time of other during the last half dozen years succumbed to the dance craze. It is said that homes have been disrupted, families torn asunder, the visual and staid decorum of the average American seriously undermined." [252]

Diana Rice, "New Settings for Old Dances," *New York Times*

As the above quotation demonstrates, the early century dance "craze" seemed to seize all strata of American society. Ragtime and jazz music introduced the white bourgeoisie to dances that originated on plantations and in brothels; old dances took on the "tough" style associated with the working-class dance hall. People danced closely and more quickly, and they sometimes danced with strangers. The dance craze was said to alter postures, gestures, kinetic rhythms and stances—to irrevocably change the way Americans *moved*. Certainly, popular dancing rid women of corsets, bustles and crinoline. According to some cultural historians, new dance practices altered gender relations as well. The intimacy of the ragtime and jazz holds seemed to presage the companionate marriage and reconfigure the "new woman."

Criticisms of new dance styles echoed to a degree those leveled against the previous century's waltz. Moralists complained about the tight embrace and gestural innuendos. Moreover, "modern dancing," as it was called, signaled the end of the group formations that characterized 19th century bourgeois social relations. As Lewis Erenberg explains,

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[252] Diana Rice,"New Setting for Old Dances Shows Waltz Again in Favor," *New York Times*, November 5th, 1922, pg.106.

> The favored dances of the nineteenth century exhibited control, regularity, and patterned movements…Dances of this kind required practice for some time before a ball to ensure that all parts would work well together. As such, they were the ritualistic height of the evening, and the fact that they were organized and led by a society grande dame served to heighten order, refinement, and social responsibility over tendencies towards privatization between partners.[253]

Thus, these types of popular dances were practiced at private parties, by the bourgeoisie, and in the spirit of cooperative achievement. While the lower classes maintained separate traditions, the privileged performed the ideals of order, propriety, and restraint to which the nation's social, moral and economic progress was hitched. Round dances like the "German" and the "Minuet" enacted "stateliness" or obliquely symbolized bourgeois courtship. Group dances in this way confirmed the social divisions that kept bodies in place.

In contrast, ragtime and jazz dance practices threatened to dissolve social boundaries. Progressive reformers often understood ragtime and jazz dance as the embodiment of urban industrial conditions; the postures, gestures, motion and speed associated with "modern dancing" signified a literal *incorporation* of the social and material changes of the early twentieth century. In fact, complaints about various dance styles often replicate those issued against the dance *halls* (and detailed in the previous chapter). Below, I demonstrate that reformers often attributed uncouth types of dance to the spatial constraints of crowded cities, the tedium of factory labor, and the "tough" attitudes of urban industrial culture. Crowded conditions, in fact, were said to create

[253] Lewis Erenberg, Steppin Out: New York Night Life and the Transformation of American Culture, (London: Greenwood Press, 1981), pg. 149.

dangerous socio-spatial intimacies that unsettled the rigid gender, race, and class divisions of the previous century (*Dangerous Intimacies).* Newly professionalized dance reformers joined causes with recreation activists in order to more effectively redress the dangers of "modern" dance, to retrain bodies and teach bourgeois manners (*The Dance Reform Movement).* In particular, Irene and Vernon Castle's famous guidebook *Modern Dancing*, exemplifies the way in which dance reform worked to recuperate the cultural authority of the white, upper and middle-classes by "sanitizing" popular dance practices (*Modern Dancing).* In addition, the Castles offered a model of the new "companionate" marriage. I argue that their public performances reconfigured "modern" gender relations in ways that accommodated white women's participation in public culture, but preserved class and race distinctions. Finally, complaints about objectionable dance practices in the recently expanded public school system illustrate the failures of bourgeois dance reforms and the potency of competing cultural forces (*Debauched Youth).*

Dangerous Intimacies

Reformers often associated ragtime and jazz dance with urban crowds and more specifically, with the perils of urban *crowding*, which created dangerous intimacies between differently raced, classed, and gendered bodies. Reformers complained about three implicitly related problems: congested, diverse and promiscuous spaces, the adoption of lower-class dance forms, and the practice of dancing too closely with "others." First, urban "crowding" meant that couples danced objectionably close; "tough" dancing in public halls afforded strangers a new and transient intimacy. Second, ragtime and jazz dance also placed the white middle and upper- classes in symbolic if not

social proximity to black and working-class cultures. The popularization of music from the margins in this way signaled the permeability of social boundaries. Dance practices literally embodied that exchange. As cultural historian Elizabeth Kendall explains, dance halls during the teens seemed particularly promiscuous and heterogeneous:

> And here people of all ages and classes—society ladies and feather aigrettes, businessmen in black dinner wear, lounge lizards, chorines, and in more democratic spots, shopgirls and clerks—rubbed elbows while tangoing and one-stepping and polkaing. Dancing was praised and decried as the great equalizer. Indeed it seemed that coordination and stamina were the only useful attributes in this dancing society—the older virtues, a good name or an education, were momentarily superfluous…the overwhelming mix-up of the social order, created something like chaos in the ballroom.[254]

Although Kendall's history smacks of hyperbole, the reform writings I discuss below seem to confirm her observation that popular dance at times acted as a democratizing force, temporarily suspending some of the previous century's social partitions.

Popular dance afforded couples—sometimes strangers—anonymous and intimate contact. If crowded tenements were responsible, in part, for the popularization of dance halls, the crowded dance floors made close or "tough" dancing almost inevitable. Famed muckraker Ruth Pickering, in fact, published an essay in the *New Republic* that describes jazz dance as a way to economize space, and as a direct response to the spatial constraints associated with urban industrialization. In her "Economic Interpretation of Jazz," Pickering suggests that jazz dance reflects the transition from pre-industrial to "modern" times. Previously, she explains, "America was a huge, sparsely populated country." Most Americans "lived on farms," where social life centered on barn dancing and

[254] Elizabeth Kendall, Where She Danced, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pg. 74.

formations like "The Virginia Reel.'" Note," Pickering writes," the unlimited space suggested by the word 'Reel.'" [255]

Pickering argues, however, that in "modern times," spatial confinements make for "more constricted" types of music and dance. In order to bolster her arguments, she asks a Professor of Economics to elaborate. The professor explains:

> "It is necessary! Moral or Immoral, forsooth under our economic system it could not be otherwise. Nor can jazz music be anything but necessary…the life of trade moves populations into cities, rents soar, space is cramped. Now the problem of modern dancing is to gain the maximum of motion in the minimum of space. And what do we have? The shimmy, a violent agitation of the entire body in an excessively confined area. What kind of music do we have? The jazz—a quantity of tiny beats to one short measure. All the dreaminess hustled out of it. Syncopation to the thirty second note."[256]

Here, the professor suggests that urban crowding creates new aesthetic forms, dance and music that vie for spatial and temporal efficiency. Neither jazz nor the shimmy linger in "dreaminess" but make haste and "hustle" in order to maximize their effects within the constraints of "modern" space. Even the notes of a jazz song make the most of their abbreviated room in "one short measure." Later that evening, Pickering spots the gentleman "toddling divinely with a decided blonde."[257]

In her "Dance Hall Dangers," activist Ella Gardner links the "immoralities" of the dance hall to the problems of urban congestion. Here, Gardner describes the intimacy on the dance floor in curiously rich language. She writes that "[t]he air was redolent with

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[255] Ruth Pickering, "The Economic Interpretation of Jazz," *The New Republic*, May 11th, 1921, pgs. 323-324.
[256] Ibid., pgs. 323-324.
[257] Ibid., pg. 324.

cheap perfumes and warm with the heavy heat of perspiring bodies." According to this reformer, jazz music contributes to the lascivious atmosphere because the lyrics of songs further encourage intimate behaviors. She observes the scene on the dance floor as follows: "'Hold me closer to your heart,' wailed the orchestra leader, while languid dancers made every effort to follow his instructions…" The effects of crowded urban conditions, coupled with "dim lights" and the music of the orchestra make for dangerously intimate practices. Gardner explains with detectable horror that in this hall, "[t]he dancing was largely a matter of the rhythmic rise and fall of closely packed bodies." Moreover, she reports, that the congestion afforded dancers nothing more than "the opportunity to excite themselves to concert pitch."[258]

The Chicago Tribune published an exposé of dance halls ("Sedate Waltz Turns to Jazz at White City") that similarly illustrates the ways in which urban intimacies seemed to unsettle social boundaries. Writing under the pseudonym "Martha," the author describes her experiences in Chicago's dance halls, where "tough" dancing and casual liaisons appear endemic to urban crowding. According this reformer, the "jazztime masses" dance too fast and too *close*. Not unlike Lindner-Isreal's account of nightlife in the bowery a decade previously, "Martha's" article begins with a description of the dance hall from the vantage point of the street: "Ablaze with a thousand electric lights, the tower of White City stands like a Moslem minaret at the feet of the great god jazz." [259] The image of the "Moslem minaret" immediately renders "White City" foreign (and

[258]Ella Gardner, "Dance Hall Dangers," *Journal of Social Hygiene*, April 1930, pg. 41.

[259] According William Howell Kenney's Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History; 1904-1930, (New York: Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993) the White City Ballroom appeared in the South Side ghetto in 1920. It seems worth noting that the club "catered to whites" but "employed black orchestras." Hence, while the crowds weren't mixed, the band was black, the music black and by extension, at least according to many horrified reporters, the dances were black (pg. 16). White City, however, was the site of the World's Fair Columbian exposition.

vaguely blasphemous). "Martha's" exposé, then, promises readers a spectacular tour through "exotic" spaces.

Once inside, assertive strangers "sweep" "Martha" onto the congested dance floor, where everyone dances "tough." She reports that, "no vagrant centimeter of atmosphere have more than a fighting chance of coming between us." Further, she exclaims, "how closely he grasps me while he complains that Mr. Beise's orchestra 'is too pepless!'" "Martha" asserts that her partner's behavior is no aberration. Intimate and alien encounters are now common to a "dance mad" public. As she explains: "My unknown partner—now so intimate—has plenty in common with dozens." Across the floor, she sees couples undisturbed by the speed, congestion and anonymities of the dance hall. For some cultural observers, the casual closeness of the urban crowds seemed to mark the transition to the "modern" era. Clearly, the conditions of urban modernity and its attendant social practices afforded strangers historically unprecedented levels of physical contact.

Further, like other reformers aghast at the influence of mass culture, "Martha" bemoans that the upper and middle classes have embraced "lower" forms of dancing. She observes "the same old mannerisms which characterized the modern steps from the gold coast of Lake Forest to the lower cabarets of Chicago." In fact, she suggests that "modern dance" practice "has permeated people high and low, and made possible the free and easy relations which mark the day."[260] Here, the adoption of "lower" class mannerisms seems to signal the incursion of new *attitudes* as well. Social dances taken

[260] Martha, "Sedate Waltz Turns to Jazz at White City," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 31st, 1921, pg. 17.

from the "lower" strata of society usher forth not merely a loosening of sexual mores, but a reconfiguring of gender roles and gender relations.

In his *Steppin Out*, Lewis Erenberg argues that the early century dance craze in fact helped to redefine gender relations for the upper classes; ragtime and later jazz manifest the ideals of the new "companionate" marriage. Closer movements, borrowed from "wilder elements," afforded upper and middle class whites greater ease and intimacy. He writes,

> The acceptance of black music and dance paralleled and drew upon a reevaluation of the previous formalism between [white] men and women. The wonderful nomenclature of the dances, taken from the barnyard, added to the general tone of exuberance, unpretentiousness, and informality between the sexes...By turning to the animal world, black culture and the red-light district, well-to-do urbanites were searching for a way to liberate some of the repressed wilder elements, the more natural elements that had been contained by gentility. Their liberation found their way into dance and social relations.[261]

Although Erenberg's uncritical conflation of black cultural forms with dances that cite "the animal kingdom," and the red-light district is somewhat disturbing, his arguments convincingly link the popularization of "close" dance to the "reevaluation" of gender relations and traditional marriage. Indeed, Erenberg suggests that new dances "reflected an emphasis on the primacy of the intimate couple."[262] Unlike the formalized group dances of previous centuries, ragtime and jazz required intimate, individual negotiations.

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[261] Lewis Erenberg, Steppin Out: New York Night Life and the Transformation of American Culture. London: Greenwood Press, 1981, pgs. 154-155.
[262] Ibid., pg. 155.

The dancing couples, liberated from the formula of the round dance, developed a kind of relational improvisation.

For many progressive reformers this kind of popular dance revealed the already cracked foundations of the bourgeois family. For instance, "Martha" blames the sexual philandering of privileged white men for the popularization of ragtime and jazz dance. "The public," she writes, "would never have had a chance to dance today if the scions of aristocratic families had not felt the primitive ambition to sow wild oats in the blatant places of the levees."[263] This reformer sees the novelty of "free and easy relations" between men and women as evidence of moral corruption, rather than the possibility of more equitable gender dynamics. Moreover, "Martha" asserts that those "free and easy relations" originate, not in the industrial cities of the North, but in the brothels of New Orleans. Perhaps "Martha" means that the upper class gentlemen "contracted" jazz dance in Southern brothels and passed it on to an unassuming public, or that the closing of the red light districts by genteel women—and in response to white men's philandering—lead to the popularization of brothel music.[264] In either case, her accusation against the "scions of aristocratic families" blatantly pronounces the unspoken assumptions of many women reformers. In addition to tainted foods and quack medicines, venereal disease quietly intruded on the sanctity of the 19th century bourgeois household. Many women joined reform efforts to redress the foul conditions of industry; some joined specifically to close the red light districts. Thus, "Martha" links two anxieties related to the popularization of black and working classes dances—cultural miscegenation and the changing gender dynamics of the bourgeois household.

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[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.

Some reformers even suggested that licentious dance should be outlawed. Circuit court Judge Michael Feinberg, for instance, argues that “”public dancing, both in fashionable ballrooms and in dingy balls, is marked by indecencies and should be prohibited.”” As *The Chicago Tribune* reports, the judge was especially horrified by the recognizable and pervasive influence of the brothel. He tells the paper, “’I have been shocked by dancing in elite places where no one would hesitate to bring his wife.’”[265] Further, like “Martha,” Feinberg insists that such practices now set the standards in all types of ballrooms: “Dancing in every public place in Chicago, in so far as it has been my observation, should be stopped.”[266] Certainly, the invasion of “brothel music” via piano rolls and sheet music unsettled the sanctions of the white middle class household. In this case, the adoption of “brothel” dances seemed to invite the *embodiment* of those uncouth elements.

Early century dance practices not only made for “an overwhelming mix-up” in public dance halls, they sometimes appeared to invade the bourgeois household as well. In 1926, one society gossip columnist for *The Chicago Tribune* reports that “the Charleston Craze has hit the Palm Beach winter homes” of the social elite. There, in the comfort and privacy of “their own Spanish villas” upper-class ladies “have taken up the Charleston with amazing agility.” The writer attributes their newfound skills to house calls made by scandalous instructors. She writes:

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[265] “Chicago Dances Indecent, Says Judge Feinberg,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 12th, 1928, pg. 23.
[266] Ibid.

> Women who make studied efforts to keep their invitation lists innocent of newcomers are learning the Negro dance in the privacy of their own Spanish villas during the afternoons. And learning it—not of high priced, sleek haired dancing instructors from New York or Paris, but of crinkly wooked, dusky skinned mentors to whom the shuffling, haphazard steps are a mere matter of muscular impulse…The most notable—if not the oldest—of the Vanderbilts can jiggle her calves and manipulate her arms with amazing gusto.[267]

Although gossip columnists were not often social reformers, this article well-illustrates that even families on the social registry embraced the new "craze." By the mid-1920's, of course, the upper-classes were known to "slum" in the African-American dance halls. Here, however, the eldest Vanderbilt reputedly receives dance instructions in the "privacy" of her summer home from a "dusky skinned" instructor. Whether this story was true or not, it seems to literalize concerns about the sorts of socio-spatial intimacies created through the popularization of dances associated with black and working-class cultures. Moreover, this anecdote suggests a culmination of the dangerous cultural intrusions first set in motion by the reproduction of sheet music and piano rolls. If recording technologies smuggled "black" music into the bourgeois household and symbolically threatened miscegenation, the popularization of ragtime and jazz music and the dance created the conditions in which African-American instructors *actually* entered the white household—in order to teach the upper-class matron how to "jiggle her calves and manipulate her arms."

Clearly, the dance reform activists that I describe below failed to fortify the social and spatial boundaries that otherwise held bodies in place. Their efforts, however,

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[267]Grace Robinson, "Charleston Craze Hits Palm Beach Grace Robinson, "*Chicago Tribune,* March, 1926, pg. F4.

illustrate both the progressive inclination towards new "professional" standards and the monopolization of "knowledge" that such standards entailed. Moreover, like the "elevation" of jazz music, dance reforms aimed to reconstitute specifically American popular practices for European audiences. As one of the nation's chief exports, dance forms similarly were said to reflect the national character. Dance activists, then, vied to produce a more "cultivated" image of America and, again, to align its national culture with European "refinement."

The Dance Reform Movement

Early century dance reforms first responded to the heavy handed efforts of dance *hall* activists like Gardner, Lindner-Isreals and Addams. State and municipal licensing requirements, which aimed to put "unsavory" establishments out of business, also threatened the commercial viability of new dance academies, where instructors of varying quality offered lessons to the less agile. Although some academies functioned more like taxi halls, many professed to teach dance as a "fine art" at a moment when most Americans only understood dance as a "lower" form of entertainment.[268] Licensing fees—in New York, for instance, fifty dollars annually, per site—effectively would shut down the small but "legitimate" schools scattered throughout cities. Dance instructors further complained that licensing failed to separate academies from dance halls, and thus equated legitimate instructors with less socially responsible saloon operators.

[268]Ballet and other modes of dance struggled to become part of the "fine art" repertoire associated with the romantic period in Europe. Americans had little exposure to ballet or any other type of exhibition dancing until the mid 19th century when the proprietor of a "Spectacular Extravaganza" (a kind of proto-vaudevillian stage) purchased a ballet troupe from Europe. The ballet and exhibition dance that most Americans knew, then, came from these types of "lower" entertainments. See Elizabeth Kendall, Where She Danced, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pgs. 7-13.

Academy proprietors, then, organized to protect their businesses and to gain professional recognition.[269] The soon-to-be-famous Oscar Duryea, then president of the newly formed New York Dancing Teachers Association, explains to the *New York Times* that "'dancing teachers belong to a profession, not a trade, and we should have a charter like any other college—not a license.'"[270] As Duryea tells the *Times*,

> 'The law as it stands allows anyone without any knowledge of dancing to teach if he pays the 50$ licensing fee. It protects the very vices it said to be aimed against. Now, in proper dancing academies the 'bear hug' and the proximity of faces during the Waltz are frowned upon. In the first place, they are unhygienic. Let men who are versed in dancing examine each professor carefully.'[271]

Duryea also suggests that social hygiene and by extension social order pivot on the proper accreditation and the careful selection of dance experts. Poorly executed dances, "bear hugs" and tough waltzes create a "proximity of faces," ("cheek to cheek," another dangerous intimacy) that lead to "loose" attitudes.[272] The professional dance instructor, then, might improve moral conditions in the dance hall by standardizing "sanitary" postures.[273] Hence, dance organizations hoped to make dance instruction distinct from trade labor, and to establish professional criteria as well as specialized kinds of

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[269] These efforts well-exemplify the progressive trend for professionalization.
[270] "Dancing Masters Fight License Law," *New York Times,* June 1909, pg.5.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Here, Duryea may mean, literally, that dancing cheek to cheek spreads disease. Again, the practice of close dancing with strangers seemed to alarm early century observers. Reformers were particularly concerned about the working class halls, where dancers who lived in filthy tenements—ravaged with small pox and tuberculosis—might further spread disease. However, "Social Hygiene" also was a euphemism for anti-prostitution efforts.
[273] Accreditation, then, meant to validate and contain that specialized knowledge and its attendant authority. If popular dance created "a social mix-up" in the dance halls, it also seemed to threaten the cultural authority of generally middle and upper class dance professionals and their attempts to monopolize knowledge about dance.

knowledge. Dance educators warned that licensure might grant untrained "speilers" (reputed pimps) professional recognition.

Dance reformers faced another major adversary, aside from well-intended urban activists and their overdrawn regulations. Evangelical progressives—vocal members of the social gospel movement—often claimed that popular dances were beyond redemption. The religious groups that lamented the previous century's Waltz turned with equal vehemence against the Fox Trot, the Tango and the Charleston. Social reformer Dr. John Roach Straton, for instance, admonished dance reformers from the pulpit. *The New York Times* reprints an excerpt from his sermon to the Calvary Baptist Church in Manhattan, as follows:

> 'The plea that these dancing masters make that they desire to purify the dance and make it safe, is idle and entirely off the mark. You cannot purify a polecat, you cannot denature a smallpox epidemic, you cannot make a rattlesnake respectable and reliable. The only thing to do with a rattlesnake is to chop off its head, and the only thing to do with the entire dancing mania, which has done more to corrupt the morals of this age than any other single force is to destroy it, root and branch.'[274]

In most instances, however, Evangelicals agreed that more effective strategies for moral elevation involved regulation, containment and surveillance. Even Phillip Yarrow of the Illinois Vigilance Society suggested the churches might act as "Love Parlors" in order to better keep an eye on the city's unsupervised youth. By the late teens, many urban churches hosted dance nights, and with the aid of accredited instructors, offered lessons

[274]Curiously, Stranton's tirade was a response to the "Weslyan Wiggle"—some new version of the "shimmy"—that affected college women.
and other dances associated with the novel freedoms afforded college women. ("Wants Prohibition to Include Dancing," *New York Times*, September, 6th, 1920, pg. 18).

in "proper" dancing. As one Catholic bishop puts it: "better to ruin a communion table than to lose a young girl; better to destroy a million yards of church carpet than to lose a boy."[275]

Dance and dance hall reformers eventually joined forces, advocating "proper" dance as healthful recreation and a means of maintaining social order. Dance reform also seemed to afford white middle and upper-class dance *hall* reformers a way to reassert their waning cultural influence. Belle Moskowitz, for instance, claimed that, like model dance halls, dance instruction provided a "better" example for the ignorant but redeemable working-classes. Moskowitz, (nee Lindner-Isreals), however, failed to recognize the pervasive influence of these popular forms. She explains to the *New York Times*: "The whole dance craze, like fashion, starts at the top and works down. The few set the style for the many. The girls on Avenue A and Broadway want to do the things they think are done in country clubs. A great responsibility rests with those who set the styles.'"[276] Thus, for Moskowitz, ignorance leads to the kinds of dance practices evident in working-class halls and the cabaret performer merely means to imitate country club behaviors. Further, she imagines cultural dominance as a kind of noble burden, a "great responsibility" for "those who set the styles." It seems unfathomable to Moskowitz that the "country club" might imitate Broadway. Although her assumptions about the direction in which cultural influence travels seems anomalous by the 1920's, her arguments illustrate a common and lingering progressive assumption that dance reforms might "elevate" the behaviors of the essentially virtuous masses.

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[275] "Condemns Age of Jazz," *New York Times*, January 27th, 1925, pg. 12.
[276] "Women Launch Crusade For Better Dance Halls," *New York Times*, March 16th, 1924, xx9.

Similarly, Marguerite Walz, Philidelphia's first (and then only) policewoman, insists that "vulgarity in modern dancing is due to ignorance." The *Times* reprints her statements, issued at a convention for the International Association of Dancing Masters, as follows:

> 'In our hearts, we all want to be ladies and gentleman, and if we can teach something of this ambition which everyone has we will have done much to make a society better. It is my belief that few people would assume the cuddling-dancing position we see and criticize so often if they simply knew and understood that public demonstration of affection breaks an important convention rule and merely tends to reveal primitive instincts.'[277]

Many dance hall activists, then, supported the efficacy of dance reform on the assumption that objectionable dances were performed predominately in the working-class halls. Moreover, these reformers continued to insist that such practices were the results of poverty and "ignorance," rather than the pervasive influence of popular culture. Fred Witlin, President of the Commercial Recreation Committee, for instance, likewise tells the *Times* that "'forms of dancing are largely a matter of group opinion: society easily adapts itself to new expressions.'" Thus, he suggests that "'[h]igher standards must be set for the frequenters of dance halls.'"[278]

Dance activists, then, campaigned to "elevate" and create standards for popular dances. Many offered free instruction nights at working-class establishments, issued dance regulations for post in the dance halls, and published dance instruction manuals for general circulation. Dance organizations also convened regularly to decide which dances

[277] "Dance Master's Fight Jazz," *New York Times,* August 7th, 1923, pg. 17.
[278] Ibid., pg. 17.

met moral and aesthetic standards, and to create alternative gestures and postures. Their efforts offer some of the most acute examples of the progressive era's moral rationalism; movements were ordered and systematized in hopes that bodies would behave in moral fashion. Certain dances were banned entirely: the "toddle" and the "shimmy"—one the result of ragtime, the other jazz—as well as "animal" dances like bunny hugs, grizzly bears and turkey trots. According to the *New York Times*, East coast reformers moved to redeem the fox trot and the Charleston as slower, "more graceful" dances. [279] In other words, dance reforms meant to rationalize the irrational responses of the body, to re-impose social and physical restraints that music otherwise seemed to circumvent.

In a number of instances, dance reformers and journalists conspired to convince the public that objectionable dances were falling out of style. Self-anointed Dancing Master of Cleveland, Fenton T. Bott assured *The New York Times* that "we all feel hope that the crest of the wave of this disgusting, wriggling 'jazz' has been reached and reports to us from every part of the country show 'clean dancing' crusades are being started everywhere."[280] Indeed, dance reform efforts appeared in most major cities, urged on by dance hall reformers as well as musicians interested in preserving "classical tastes." Paul Klugh, founder and President of the new Music Industries Chamber of Commerce argues that when the public demanded better music more cultivated forms of dance inevitably would follow:

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[279] In 1925, the Society of American Teachers of Dances debated the merits of the Charleston for several days. Some members vied to keep intact the kicks and complicated steps to which others objected. Ultimately, more conservative factions won. Educators reduced the dance to its most basic moves, eliminating the unladylike leg kicks that seemed to cite the sexy can-can.

[280] "Finds Jazz on the Decline," *New York Times*, January 3, 1922, pg. 24.

> The public trend, now, is undoubtedly towards more natural music…Better music makes for better dancing and we are most eager to co-operate with the dancing masters in their earnest efforts to dignify dances and free them from all objectionable dance attitudes and criticism. This is certainly the right time to take up this matter for the public has had too much jazz and according to the opinion of many in touch with conditions, will welcome these reforms.[281]

Appeals to popular "taste," or to the public's interest in keeping abreast of trends, however, failed to convince the majority of recreational dancers to discard objectionable postures. In fact, the dance "craze" not only continued to proliferate, but rapidly spread to Western Europe, carrying the physical markers of race and class differences specific to America.

Like ragtime and jazz music, dance was one of America's first popular exports and said to represent its national character, for better or worse. One writer for the *The New York Times* complains that "flippant foreigners call this the 'country of the fox trot' and label our intelligence accordingly."[282] Thus, like some musicians, professional dance instructors hoped to rescue dance from its lowly "origins," and to present Europe with a more "cultivated" image of America. Lois H. Chalif, President of the Society of the American Teachers of Dancing explains that, "'America is the dance leader of the world. Paris and London follow our lead and we must only teach dances that will win the favor of people of culture."[283] In 1926, the International Dancing Teachers Association, in fact, met in Paris in order to "purify the Charleston." These concerned activists determined that, given the ardor with which Parisian youth took to American dance, educators must

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[281] "Says Jazz Will Sing Its Swan Song Soon," *New York Times,* August 27th, 1920, pg. 20.
[282]Diana Rice, "New Setting for Old Dances Shows Waltz Again in Favor," *New York Times*, November 5th, 1922, pg.106.
[283] "Dancing Masters Uplift Charleston," *New York Times,* August 25th, 1925, pg. 11

amend the objectionable movements "before the eccentric dance could be sponsored by the best instructors." The Charleston's European defenders similarly insisted that American dance might find redemption in the best academies and through a process of "purification." European advocates, however, treated the Charleston like a kind of delinquent. "'Don't condemn it to death,'" one Czech man argues. "'Correct its faults and set it on the right path so that it can be made into a decent dance.'"[284]

According to the *Times* correspondent, however, some European adversaries of the Charleston felt that the racial characteristics of American culture placed its popular exports entirely beyond redemption. One Parisian puts it bluntly: "'the negro dance is immoral and not fit for good society.'"[285] In fact, some Europeans who objected to American dance implied that "negro" gestures marked white Americans as well—that the postural signifiers of "blackness" made American kinetics distinct from those of Europe. Hence, dance forms from the United States, even "sanitized" versions, continued to carry the traces of racial difference. European reformers further worried that imported "negro" dance and music might eclipse old-world cultural forms.[286] The Dancing Teachers of Paris claimed that many of the more "cultured" European dances, like the Spanish *Paso Doble* and the Scottish *Espagnole* had fallen out of style with the arrival of American music. One instructor complains: "'These [dances] have been unjustly barred by American jazz bands, especially the negro variety, which prefer to play jazz music instead.'"[287]

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[284] Ibid.
[285] "Paris Cardinal Warns on Dress and Dances," *The New York Times,* December 20th, 1920, pg. 14.
[286] "Dancing Masters Move to Purify Charleston," *New York Times;* May 15th, 1926, pg. 19.
[287] Ibid.

Europeans also objected to the ways in which American dance altered gender performances. To some European observers, African-American and working-class dances appeared more *masculine*. In 1920, the Cardinal of Paris denounced jazz dance and, as the *New York Times* reports "recalled to women and girls their duty to abstain from indecent dress and unseemly dance." In particular, the Cardinal warns against "indecorous dances which mostly bear exotic names and are of exotic origins." While in this case, jazz dance appears merely "indecorous," contrary to feminine morality for its "exotic origins," the Cardinal further implies that such practices render young women less feminine. From the pulpit, he assures listeners that jazz dance soon will pass out of fashion because few *women* "want to spend an evening getting hot and dusty in Montmartre."[288] In other cases, the behaviors associated with the "exotic" and dances seemed to reflect the masculine culture specific to American industry. For example, the Russian ballerina Irina Pavlova, frequently interviewed for her "cultured" opinions, echoed the complaints of dance hall reformers that the "hustle" of American capitalism embodied in popular dance practice made young women less graceful and, implicitly, less feminine. She tells *The New York Times* that: "American girls should make excellent dancers. The trouble is they are in too much of a hurry, and care only about making money.'"[289]

As I suggest below, exhibition dancers Irene and Vernon Castle galvanized a movement aimed to make ragtime dance practices more acceptable to the social elite. Many of these reforms banked on the public renegotiation of gender roles. Irene Castle in particular offered an image of "modern" femininity at once spirited *and* refined. Their

[288] "Paris Cardinal Warns on Dress and Dances," *The New York Times*, December 20th, 1920, pg. 14.
[289] Ibid.

guidebook *Modern Dancing* attempted to redefine the term, and by extension the social practices associated with the age. Castle dance reforms in this way presented an alternative vision of American "modernity," one more closely aligned with ideas about European sophistication. Moreover, the Castles provided a model of the new "companionate marriage" that sutured gender performance to the maintenance of class and race distinctions.

Modern Dancing

Of the numerous schools that appeared in response to the dance craze, the Castle Dance Academies offered some of the most prestigious instruction. Irene and Vernon Castle—whose name happens to invoke the solid structures of old world aristocracy—started their careers as exhibition dancers in Paris. When they returned to the U.S., the pair set out not only to correct the "vulgar" habits of the ragtime masses, but to redefine "modern dancing." By extension, the Castles also presented another image of modernity in America—freer and less formal, but sophisticated, civilized and orderly. If popular dance reflected the "unsavory" and chaotic conditions of urban industrialization, as well as its effects on gender performance and relations, the Castles offered an alternative vision of how "modern" men and women might behave (and dance). In the popular imagination, they exemplified the new companionate marriage; their dance performances seemed to provide a visual allegory of their intimacy and friendship. Further, by

bolstering their image as European sophisticates, the Castle's made ragtime dance styles acceptable to the middle and upper classes.[290]

Vernon Castle was said to embody the modern gentlemen, with slick hair and a graceful but commanding presence. His status as a British expatriate further added to the couple's old-world credibility. Irene Castle cast herself as the "spirited waif," a plucky, youthful companion for the man of taste. Her particular performance of the "new woman" relied on the aesthetic of suspended adolescence; she was one of the first to discard her corset and embrace the boyish look that came to characterize the next decade. In preparation for an appendectomy, Irene Castle cut her hair up to her chin, effectively launching the rage for "Castle Crops" and bobs. Many historians also credit Irene Castle's dance performances for setting dress styles. During the teens and early twenties, before skirts moved scandalously upward and girls began to show their stockings, Irene Castle favored long, gauzy, layered skirts that meant to conjure "exotic" settings (ancient Greece, sometimes the "Arab" world). In this way, she provided a model for "modern" femininity that defied Victorian conventions, but remained safely desexualized.

More significantly, perhaps, her dresses were designed for exhibition dancing; they allowed for greater movement but also meant to visually emphasize her form. In

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[290] Eve Golden argues in her Vernon and Irene Castle's Ragtime Revolution (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 2007) that "Vernon and Irene Castle became the personification of ragtime, opening the way for cabarets and nightclubs that will become permanent fixtures in New York and other big cities. Before the Castles the only places to go out dancing were private parties and the lowest of public dance halls and beer gardens," (pg. 3). Certainly, the cultural influence of the Castles—particularly their ability to make dances understood as black and working class acceptable through precisely this sort of gestural eugenics—is significant. My research indicates, however, that ragtime dance, dance halls and even grand ballrooms pre-existed their notoriety. See, for instance Lewis Erenberg's Steppin Out: New York Night Life and the Transformation of American Culture (London: Greenwood Press, 1981). More importantly, I argue that the Castle's did not "personify ragtime," but rather, embodied a certain vision of modernity that meant to create social order through the rationalization (also race and class purification)of the body. In other words, they "personified" ragtime devoid of African-American and working class postural signifiers.

fact, the Castle's belabored interest in *image* points to the ways in which dance performed as a visual art helped to legitimate their efforts. As historian Elizabeth Kendall explains that Vernon Castle "took the spirit of partnering from Russian Ballet…the man's task was to show off the woman's lines."[291] The *New Republic* commented on one Castle performance, "'It was certainly the least sensual dancing in the world; the appeal was all visual.'"[292] The Castles transformed the raunchy and disorderly postures of the dance hall—which threatened social hierarchies precisely because they offered *embodied* experiences—into the controlled spectacle of "high art." Castle dance reform, then, submitted the dangers of music and dance to the removed logics of sight.

The Castles performed regularly on reputable stages and in the homes of wealthy patrons. Middle-class hostesses preparing for parlor parties and wealthy gentleman interested in taking advantage of the new urban recreation often attended their classes and public performances. Instruction fees (25.00 $ an hour), of course, prohibited working-class youth from lessons. The Castle's extremely popular guidebook, *Modern Dancing* (1914), however, provided instructions that both dance hall reformers and dance educators adamantly embraced. Replete with photographic illustrations of correct postures, the manual offered elaborate explanations about how to execute each step and a convenient list of "do not" injunctions for post in the dance halls. These commands appear at the end of *Modern Dancing*, as follows:

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[291]Elizabeth Kendall, Where She Danced., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pg. 98.
[292] As cited in Lewis Erenberg's Steppin Out: New York Night Life and the Transformation of American Culture. (London: Greenwood Press, 1981), pg. 166.

Do not wriggle the shoulders.
Do not shake the hips.
Do not twist the body.
Do not pump the arms.
Do not hop—glide instead.
Avoid low, fantastic, and acrobatic dips.
Stand far enough away from each other to allow free movement of the body in order to dance gracefully and comfortably…
Remember you are at a social gathering and not in a gymnasium.
Drop the Turkey Trot, the Grizzly Bear, the Bunny Hug, etc. These dances are ugly, ungraceful, and out of fashion.[293]

In addition to prohibitions against specific gestures and movements, the Castle's dance instructions required slowly timed music. Their namesake step, the "Castle Walk," provided the kinetic and postural foundation for all "properly" executed dances. The move encouraged a *slowed gait* in order to eliminate the objectionable speed and "hustle" often associated with "modern dancing." "Our modern Tangos and Waltzes," Vernon Castle insists, "should be slow and graceful and full of pretty measures that are stepped in a fashion almost as stately as the old-time Minuet."[294] Hence, a carefully executed one-step structured around the Castle Walk meant to make ragtime dance appear "stately," and vaguely European:

> Bear in mind this one important point: when I say walk, that is all it is. Do not shuffle. Do not bob up and down or trot. Simply walk as softly and smoothly as possible taking a step to every count of the music…Now, raise yourself up slightly on your toes at each step, with the legs a trifle stiff, and breeze happily and easily along, and you know all you there is to know about the Castle Walk.[295]

[293] Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, Modern Dancing, (New York: World Syndicate Co., 1914), pg. 177.
[294] Ibid., pg. 161.
[295] Ibid., pg. 47.

Despite their insistence on slower paces, the Castles did not advocate a return to country formations; they found the square dance particularly loathsome in its invocation of the barn and the country fair. Nor did they conjure notions of Elizabethan "play," or idyllic rural settings. Instead, the Castles vied to make dances more "wholesome" and "refined" by eliminating lascivious postures. For instance, the full frontal waltz, popularized through "tough" dancing in the working class halls, received just such treatment. Vernon Castle concedes that "for a long time…the Waltz was a perpetual thorn in the side of the anemic moralist." He recalls that churchmen once "objected to the lawless arm of the sterner sex encircling the graceful form of a young and beautiful female." Against that objection, still voiced by increasingly less credible factions, Castle offers the pointedly named "Hesitation Waltz."

The "Hesitation" meant to correct what the "old-fashioned Waltz" originally had suggested. A pause before the rush forward and one prior to retreat made the abrupt frontal confrontation of the Waltz look *shy*, as though it suddenly lost its nerve. Moreover, Castle advised dancers to hesitate on every third beat, and always on the beat, so that the movements created an orderly form, rather than the off-beat disorder associated with fast, syncopated music. As for the "lawless arm" (which calls to mind the weirdly paternalist adage "long arm of the law"), the Castles insisted that the gentleman must rest only his wrist on his partner's upper back and his arm should remain firm but relaxed and bent at a wide angle. In this way, "encircling" looked far more stylized than an embrace and by no means "lawless." In fact, the arm in such a posture appeared disciplined and deliberate; it also held the "graceful form of the young and beautiful female" more securely in place.

The Tango required similarly severe alterations, as well as an elaborate origin narrative meant to justify its inclusion in the canon. In *Modern Dancing,* Vernon Castle assures readers that "the Tango is not, as commonly believed, of South American origin." Instead, he describes the Tango's development in curiously transnational and multi-ethnic terms: "It is an old gipsy dance that came to Argentina by the way of Spain, where it probably became invested with certain features of the old Moorish dances." According to Castle, the Argentines rid the Tango of "its reckless gipsy traits" and Moorish underpinnings but added "a certain languid indolence peculiar to their temperament."[296] Nonetheless, he suggests that its postural and rhythmic components are similar to the European minuet—a dance that he invokes regularly in *Modern Dancing* in order to align "modern" forms with European traditions. Better still, Castle suggests, the Tango owes its "modern" incarnation to the dance studios of Paris, where contact with a less "indolent" and "reckless" culture made the steps more refined. He writes,

> After Paris had taken the dance up a few years ago, its too sensuous character was gradually toned down, and from a rather obscene exhibition, which is still indulged in by certain cabaret performers, it bloomed forth a polished and extremely fascinating dance, which has not had its equal in rhythmical allurement since the days of the minuet.[297]

The French perform what Castle elsewhere calls "a sublimated form of Tango;" in Freudian terms, the dancer channels libido into a dubiously desexualized performance art.[298] The Castles likewise reordered limbs and postures, eliminating anything that

[296] Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, Modern Dancing, (New York: World Syndicate Co., 1914), pg. 83.
[297] Ibid., pg. 83.
[298] Ibid., pg. 20.

signified an "obscene exhibition."[299] In the Castle's version of the Tango, a "courtly" knee bend replaced the "salacious suggestion" of the low dip. Somewhere between a curtsy and a bow, dancers executed the knee bend in parallel form. In this way, they eliminated or "sublimated" any suggestion of sexual conquest and buried the Tango's most dramatic gesture under the ritualistic ideation of romantic courtship. Similarly, the "promenade" sequence of the dance withdrew from the tight hold and cheek to cheek pose for which the Tango is still recognized. Instead, the Castles faced the same direction and maintained a pointed distance as they moved across the floor by scissoring their legs. Hence, the Tango's "refinement" required a chaste performance, and a class upgrade attributed to the French.

Vernon Castle famously exclaimed that "when a good orchestra plays a rag, one simply has *got* to move."[300] Yet, in addition to alterations that made dances more "wholesome," refined and "European," the Castles also hoped to make ragtime dances appear less black and working-class. Although the couple employed the renowned African-American ragtime composer and pianist James Reese Europe to lead their performance band, the Castles submitted objectionable dance to a series racial "purifications." Lewis Erenberg cites Irene Castle's unpublished notes for *Modern Dancing*:

[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid., pg. 43.

> 'We get our new dances from the Barbary Coast. Of course, they reach New York in a very primitive condition and have to be considerably toned down before they can be used in the drawing room. There is just one arrived now. It is still very, very crude—and it is called 'shaking the shimmy.' It's a nigger dance of course, and it appears to be a slow walk with a frequent twitching of the shoulders. The teachers may try to make something of it.'[301]

In this way, the Castles poached popular dances from the social margins and then filtered these through a sort of gestural eugenics program. Castle dance reforms not only aligned "modern" American dance with European traditions in an effort to bolster the waning cultural influence of the white bourgeoisie, they attempted to preserve the race and class distinctions of the white body. In her introduction to *Modern Dancing*, theater agent Elizabeth Marbury asserts that through Vernon Castle's instruction the "much misunderstood Tango becomes an evolution of the eighteenth-century minuet." Evidently, the Castle Tango appears at the exalted ends of dance history, its' "evolution" the teleological result of meandering refinements, from the Moors to the Spanish, to Argentina through Paris, and finally, back again to North America. Along the way, "refinement" breeds out less desirable movements and postures—the Argentine "indolence" and "gipsy recklessness"—leaving what Vernon Castle calls the "quintessential modern dance."[302]

For the Castles, then, "modern dancing" meant the systematic erasure of gestural traces that pointed to the incorporation of "race" or "class" differences—and, hence, to the dangerous dissolution of social and symbolic boundaries often associated with

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[301] Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, Modern Dancing, (New York: World Syndicate Co., 1914), pg. 164.
[302] The Tango's trajectory here reads like manifest destiny; those "refinements," pass through various bodies and cultures, and are perfected at last in America. In other words, this is also about progress.

modernity in America. In fact, Marbury confirms that the Castle's dance reform might be understood as an effort to preserve "whiteness," and moreover, as a means to recuperate progress. In what read like a direct address to the dance hall reformers, Marbury writes:

> I believe that if every woman's club would give a free dance for a week, with an instructor and a chaperone present, they would do more good to the race than by discussing Eugenics or by indulging in the flippant study of social economics.[303]

It is unclear if, by "the race," Marbury means "human" or "white," although, a conflation of the two seems likely. In any case, Marbury suggests that the efforts of settlement workers, recreation activists and other progressive reformers might better affect "moral uplift" through the proper training of bodies and attendant lessons in social etiquette. Marbury argues that the absence of "cultivation" rather than social and economic conditions—or even, genetic predisposition—produce objectionable behaviors. Here, then, social progress requires nothing more than the adoption of bourgeois manners.

To this end, *Modern Dancing* includes an entire chapter on social etiquette in which the Castles insist that "knowledge of many dances does not make either a man or a woman graceful on the floor: there must be besides knowledge of dance, a knowledge of etiquette, of life's little courtesies and life's gentle thoughts."[304] More significantly, perhaps, the "grace and etiquette" chapter of *Modern Dancing* invokes, among other things, a concept of progress and order hitched to Protestant individualism and its performed moralities. Vernon Castle writes, for instance, that "the vulgarity of a dance

[303] Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, Modern Dancing, (New York: World Syndicate Co., 1914), pg. 37.
[304] Ibid., pg. 134

lies always as much in the mind of the dancer as in the steps, and a suggestive dance is inevitably the outcome of an evil thought…"[305] For instance, Castle admonishes the "gentlemen" to avoid the "straggle hold" of the bunny hug, which he links explicitly to lower class forms. His language, in fact, seems to mark the otherwise innocuous-sounding dance with a certain classed violence. In contrast, Castle argues that good dancing merely extends "good manners" and "pure thoughts." A gentleman's comportment in this way reflects his class standing; Castle suggests that proper dance, *sans* "straggle hold," illustrates a more sophisticated masculinity, one conscious of social graces and publically performed dignities. Castle writes that in "modern dancing," "all is no more etiquette than it is dancing, no more grace of manners than grace of body or mind, but it marks the difference between the good dancer and the poor one, between the gentleman and the roisterer."[306]

Irene Castle similarly advises ladies to affect "graceful" comportment as an outward demonstration of internal morality. Significantly, Mrs. Castle also describes ladylike posture as a negotiation between freedom and restraint. She writes,

> In modern dances, the dancer stands with lithe grace and ease, but very erect, and dances with her feet not her whole body. Her outstretched fingers rest against the palm of her partner's hand. Her other hand rests on his arm, and there should be space between them. Then the lady should hold herself erect, that this space should remain there.[307]

Here, the lady dances with her feet alone, rather than "her whole body," which clearly means to avoid unchaste frictions and, further, locates her kinesis—her dance floor

[305] Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, Modern Dancing, (New York: World Syndicate Co., 1914), pg. 134.
[306] "Roisterer" is synonymous with "ruffian" (Ibid., pg. 135).
[307] Ibid. pg. 135.

mobility—in the most remote and innocuous appendages, far from swinging arms, kicking legs, or swiveling hips. In other words, she propels herself only on tiny strapped heels that peek out from beneath her long, modest, gauzy skirts. Mrs. Castle advises that proper dance "should not mean the exposure of a stocking." Moreover, the lady's dance posture also works to navigate the dangerous intimacies of "modern dancing" and its unprecedented holds. Couples might dance more closely than in the past, but the lady remains so by maintaining "space" from her partner through erect posturing—the gendered vigilance against the inappropriate touch that marks "modern dancing" with *class*.

In this way, the Castle's seemed to reconfigure the public relationship between men and women: they offered an image of marriage as chummy companionship, and the otherwise sensuous practice of "modern dancing" as a kind of disembodied spectacle. In a certain sense, then, the gender performances offered by Castle dance reforms also made participation in the new dance "craze" more legitimate for the white bourgeoisie and the "lady" in particular. Irene Castle's refined exhibition dancing suggested a means to acceptably inhabit women's new public visibility. Hence, *Modern Dancing* posits a vision of "modernity" that defies the era's association with decadence, debauchery and moral decline, by recuperating and renegotiating the bourgeois marriage in the wake of "modern" intimacies—including unprecedented contact with differently raced and classed bodies, as well as women's novel participation in public culture.

In her wildly celebratory *Vernon and Irene Castle's Ragtime Revolution*, Eve Golden argues that,

> Vernon and Irene Castle became the personification of ragtime, opening the way for cabarets and nightclubs that will become permanent fixtures in New York and other big cities. Before the Castles the only places to go out dancing were private parties and the lowest of public dance halls and beer gardens.[308]

As I suggest here, the Castles significantly influenced ragtime dance practices as well as attendant gender performances. In particular, their dance reforms subjected popular practices to a series of gestural eugenics. Ragtime dance, dance halls and even grand ballrooms, however, pre-existed their notoriety. More importantly, I claim here that the Castle's did not "personify ragtime," but rather, embodied a certain vision of modernity that meant to create social order through the rationalization--via race and class purification—of the body. Or, perhaps, the ragtime that they "personified" notably was devoid of African-American and working-class postural signifiers.

In 1916, and at the peak of World War One, Vernon Castle joined the British air force. He survived the war, but died in a mid air collision over Fort Worth Texas in 1918. His death certainly marked the end of ragtime exhibition dance and ragtime dance reform. More significantly, perhaps, cultural historians often posit the transition from the ragtime to jazz "craze" at end of WWI; that musical shift also purportedly signals the moment when progressive optimism gave way to a cultural *ennui* particularly pervasive among the young. During the 1920's, reform efforts focused less often on the adult couple or the bourgeois marriage, and more intensely on its now incorrigible offspring.

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[308] Eve Golden argues in her Vernon and Irene Castle's Ragtime Revolution, (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), pg. 3

Debauched Youth

Perhaps the trouble with dance music's ability to unsettle social divisions was most acutely pronounced in complaints about American youth. In this case, too, dance inspired troubling kinds of intimacies. New dances suggested the further dissolution of social boundaries and, thus, the performative differences that kept white middle and upper-class bodies distinct from those of the unruly "masses." Progressive reforms, of course, made an eighth grade education mandatory for all "native born" American citizens. These expansions aimed to move children from factories to schools, and to provide American youth with an education in standard academic disciplines, as well as social and civic graces. Hence, popular music and dance seemed to compete with progressive education efforts, at least in terms of training the young to behave appropriately.

In addition to the dance halls, the nation's newly expanded school systems seemed to be a hot bed of "social mix-up." Many reformers embraced the idea that educational institutions, like dance halls, might provide an opportunity to arrest licentious behaviors, and to regulate and instruct the young. In 1912, education reformer Clarence Arthur Perry published a lengthy, expository essay in the *New York Times* in which he implored readers to "make decent dancing a feature in public schools." Perry writes,

> The use of public schools for the promotion of right dancing would reach further than the mere instruction of the young in the proper steps and movements. It would offer, through our school systems, an opportunity to extend school influences far beyond the radius to which they now extend… We should then be teaching not only healthful exercise and grace of body but also developing dance traditions, ballroom manners. A little work of that kind would make such sad things as the turkey trot and bunny hug unpopular because they would be recognized as bad form.[309]

Perry argues that educators need only "good floors, good music and attractive decorations" to transform the gymnasium into a proper dance hall. "The problem of any society," he claims, "is not how to keep young men and women apart, but how to properly bring them together so that they become acquainted and keep society alive." Schools dances, then, might provide "healthful" regulations and moderate courtship rituals. Like most progressive reformers, Perry imagines that poor social behavior is the result of ignorance, rather than essential delinquency. Better influences and exposure to proper social and physical postures, Perry asserts, will vastly improve dance styles. "The epidemic of tough dancing that has swept the country," he claims, "has been due to the fact that we have let the proprietors of dance halls set the styles instead of seeing to it that they were formed by those who have the interests of our young people at heart."[310]

By the mid teens, however, the popular press was replete with stories about affluent high school students run amok. *The Chicago Tribune* reports that students were "rapped on the knuckles" at Hyde Park High School by the ladies of the Illinois Equal

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[309] Marshall, Edward, "Make Decent Dancing a Feature in Public Schools," *New York Times*, March 31st, 1912, pg. SM6.
[310] Marshall, Edward, "Make Decent Dancing a Feature in Public Schools," *New York Times*, March 31st, 1912, pg. SM6.

Suffrage League. The organization met with school and community officials in the gymnasium, where they publicly rebuked the unruly youths. Evidently, Hyde Park teenagers known to frequent the infamous Woodland Lawn dance hall—and who learned to "regale themselves with the latest steps and jazz music"—had misbehaved at the high school dance. The dance hall proprietor, in his own defense, acknowledges that "the average high school dance is not a fit moral spectacle." The "bold and forward modern steps" meant that popular in the dance halls clearly had found its way into the public school system as well. Moreover, the proprietor warned that the intrusion of lower class dance practice would prove particularly detrimental to the character of young women. The high school principal concurred. Because of jazz dance, he tells the *Tribune*, "it is mighty hard for good looking girls to reach the age of 21 and still be decent."[311]

Three years later, in 1921, the school board of Chicago voted to ban the shimmy and the "tumultuous toddle," from dances at high schools and other public facilities. One community center was shut down for its failure to regulate these "trick" moves. The *Tribune* reports that "board members say the recommendation was made after…a committee of teachers requested several young people leave the floor *if they could not refrain from being so modern*" (my emphasis).[312] Evidently, the Castles attempts to redefine "modern dancing" failed spectacularly. The Dancing Masters association participated in these debates as well.[313] As one *Tribune* headline declares: "Dance

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[311] "Hyde Park High Pupil's Dancing Kicks Up Dust," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 6th, 1918, pg. 13.
[312] "Shimmy? Toddle? No Such Doin's In Our Schools!" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 18th, 1921, 20.
[313] I found only one article in which critics deem young men the problem. In 1927, a journalist at the *Chicago Tribune* ran a semi-investigative article about the causes of youth delinquency. It begins with familiar accusations from Women's Club leaders about poor parenting and "modern" decadence but ends with a contentious refutation from Chief of Police Charles Larkin. Larkin, who prosecuted a number of dance hall abductions and rapes offers this rare defense of the modern girl: "To my mind, most girls are good and most boys are bad. Some of them are damn bad. But you would hardly expect to find bad

Masters Rate Flapper Standards Low." According to the paper, the Juvenile Protection Association of Chicago called a meeting with the Parent Teacher Association in response to numerous complaints made by dance hall proprietors about the behaviors of affluent white youth. The *Tribune* explains that,

> Parents of High School students need not worry over the peril of their morals being contaminated by associations they made in the dance halls. But the dance hall manager has to worry for fear the moral standards of his patrons should be lowered by the admission of high school students.[314]

In 1924, the paper reported that "School Parties So Wild That Dance Masters Strike." The journalist writes, "this summer, some of these dances have gotten so bad that the owners of dance halls that respect their reputations have been forced to call police to quell their aristocratic young guests." One proprietor assures readers that youth only "followed the crowd." "Boys and girls of ours don't want to be tough," he claims," and they don't want the rough parties, but they are afraid to not join for fear of being thought *slow*."[315] Here, the proprietor defends the behaviors of affluent youth with the same arguments made on behalf of the working classes: modernity in American subjects otherwise wholesome youth to a fast "crowd."

That affluent high school students took up working-class dances underscores both the pervasive influence of the popular and the failure of the bourgeois institution to

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boys…in small towns. These young men [who attacked several girls] were college boys and the best home environment. One would think that young men of education and refinement would be the protectors of womankind. No doubt they all had good mothers and fathers…" In response to the Women's Club ladies, the police Chief here points vaguely in the direction of class and gender privilege as the primary cause of "ruined" girls. (John Kelley, "Modern Girls Need Curbing, Matrons Aver; But Police Captain O.K.'s Them, Blames Boys," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 3rd, 1922, pg. 3).

[314] "Dance Masters Rate Flappers Standards Low," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 26th, 1924, g. 8.

[315] Maureen M'Kernan, "School Parties So Wild Dance Masters Strike," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 26th, 1924, pg. 8.

regulate social postures. As one school official tells the reporter: "naturally, we do not believe the shimmy and toddle are proper dances for school entertainments." Nonetheless, the board of education, school officials and dance hall proprietors engaged in "a lively little debate about the moral standing of the wiggly dances."[316] These articles about debauched youth obviously demonstrate a shift in public opinion. Rather than modeling etiquette for the working-classes, many social reformers begin to complain about the incorrigible affluent. The trend for middle and upper class "slumming," of course, left race and class privileges intact, but it also seemed to mark the end of certain progressive era assumptions. Bad rich kids rattled ideas about the essential morality of the middle and upper-classes and, consequently, undermined the authority of social reformers. Moreover, the willful debauchery of the young suggested that social environment did not necessarily dictate behavior. This, in turn, threw into question the logics of a movement premised on "redemption" through education—on the notion of an ignorant but redeemable working-class. By extension, poorly behaved, middle-class youth seemed to deny the possibility of a rational, ordered modernity.

Conclusion

In the spring of 1922 over three hundred delegates from the women's auxiliary of the Salvation Army and representatives from numerous social clubs and local churches convened in Chicago's Fine Arts Building to address the problem of the city's suddenly swollen maternity homes. *The Chicago Daily Tribune* paraphrased the arguments of the convention, as follows: "with seductive jazz music as the initial lure, a 'horrifyingly large

[316] "Shimmy? Toddle? No Such Doin's In Our Schools!" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 18th, 1921, pg. 20.

number of girls of superior education and refinement' have danced their way into Chicago's maternity homes over the last two years." According to the most vocal factions, the bad behavior of otherwise respectable women indicated a nationwide "breakdown of moral barriers." Salvation Army brigade leader Annie Cowden explained to the crowd,

> 'Formerly, these unfortunate girls were drawn from the very poor and illiterate classes. But recently a much higher type of girl has been coming to us—school teachers, college students, stenographers, clerks and modern dancing is to blame. Take the case of Elizabeth____. Elizabeth was a high school graduate! I asked her if dancing had anything to do with her downfall. "Oh," she said wringing her hands, "it had everything to do with it."'[317]

For these activists and club leaders, the debauchery of "school teachers, college students, stenographers, clerks…" illustrated the failures of progressive social reforms and the potency of competing cultural forces. As Cowden suggests, neither the expansion of the public education system ("Elizabeth was a high school graduate!") nor women's social and political advancement ("school teachers, college students, stenographers, clerks…") seemed capable of inoculating even "respectable" girls against the effects of licentious music and its attendant social practices.

Despite the efforts of dance reformers like the Castles, by the end of WWI, "lower" forms of dance pervaded popular practice. If music intruded on the bourgeois household or lured women into the streets, and if dance halls and cabarets created dangerous and invisible spaces, then dance practices signaled the literal incorporation of performed, cultural and *inessential* differences. In this way, popular dance pointed to a

[317]"Salvation Army Speaker Decries Jazz Influence," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 31st, 1922, pg. 9.

drastically altered public culture in which physical and symbolic contact rattled social partitions, or at least, altered the gestures and postures that otherwise marked those divisions. This is not to suggest that ragtime and jazz dance created a more egalitarian society, or that the upper and middle-classes suddenly recognized the class condescension endemic to progressive social reforms. On the contrary, that dance became the object of these efforts indicates the degree to which some reformers and critics continued to invest in the distinction of the white, bourgeois body—and in coherent and familiar performances of gender.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

"And so the great god jazz spread over our fair land—until the very electric pianos bowed their allegiance. Every dance hall in Harlem had its whining saxophone, and every telephone operator in South Bend was doing the shimmy."[318]

Helen Bullit Lowry

Activist and writer Helen Bullit Lowry represents, perhaps, one of more objectionable factions of progressive reform. Lowry wrote extensively about the dangers of "savage" sounds. She also supported white separatist movements that vied to "return" African-Americans to the "continent of their ancestors." Thus, she aligned herself with the Southern reformers who enacted "Jim Crow" laws in the name of "progress." Readers may recall that Lowry also wrote about her childhood in the South and her relationship to African-American music, which, she concludes, is rooted in "voodoo" practices.

In the essay cited above, Lowry similarly describes the pervasive influence of jazz in vaguely mystical terms: the false idol to which "the very electric pianos bowed their allegiance." In this case, Lowry writes with renewed optimism about what she believes has passed as a national fad. Paul Whiteman's symphonic arrangements, she suggests, now set the standard for jazz performances everywhere. According to Lowry, symphonic jazz not only eliminates the "voodoo" elements of the music through formal arrangement, it also maintains a separation between musicians and their audiences. Musicians stay in place. No one plays unplanned solos. No one shouts "O Boy." Jazz fans may only appreciate music silently and from their seat. Eliminating the interactions between the bands and the listeners recuperates public decorum and attempts to preserve social order by enforcing public restraint.

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[318] "Putting the Music Into Jazz," *The New York Times Book Review & Magazine*, February 19th, 1922, pg. 41.

By the 1930's, of course, swing music—sometimes called "boogie woogie"—had replaced early jazz as the object of moral scorn. For a few moments in the mid 1920's, however, critics like Lowry were content with Paul Whiteman's "elevations." The bourgeois cultivation of jazz music, of course, well-illustrates the mechanics of cultural hegemony. In this case, the policing of public culture did more than merely villainize or "other;" it purportedly worked to capture and transform the unruly elements of mass music. Lowry's essay lauds the synthesis that leads to enlivened symphonies, to music that encourages more "civilized" behaviors. But, like other cultural and commercial co-optations, Paul Whiteman's symphonic jazz certainly did not eradicate "objectionable" music. His "elevated" forms faced competition from "hot" jazz aficionados, black and white, who continued to play to enthusiastic, kinetic audiences.

Moreover, as Susan McClary points out, cultural co-optations, while frequently exploitative, also introduce novel music to wider audiences. McClary argues that dance music in particular has the potential to change the ways in which audiences experience their bodies, "move through space," or even understand the act of listening. The commercialization of music, or what I describe above as its "acculturation," rarely eliminates its ability to alter collective culture. Further, McClary suggests that:

> [I]f we reflect on the twentieth-century culture, it seems undeniable that, during this period, African-Americans took over the making of images, the shaping of bodies and subjectivities through music. Despite the industry, even with all of its rip-offs, the commercial process has also contributed to the creation of musical forms we know and love, and to the sensibilities that now seem natural to most of us, black or white.[319]

[319] Susan McClary, "Same as it Ever Was: Youth Culture and Music," in Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture, New York: Routledge, 1994, pg. 34.

Progressive social reformers worried precisely about the ways in which ragtime and jazz music might drastically change cultural "sensibilities." Their efforts to recuperate progress and to reconfigure public culture through the policing of these musical forms demonstrably *failed.* Syncopated popular music invaded the bourgeois household, permeated public spaces, and changed the ways in which Americans socialized. My project, then, demonstrates how early century music and dance operated as a site of contest for debates over public culture and hegemonic struggles that hitched various types of authority to aesthetic production, the regulation of public spaces, and the dancing body. For some reformers, ragtime and jazz, as the "music of the machine age," seemed to manifest and reproduce the unsavory conditions associated with urban, industrial modernity in America. Print media helped to popularize this view by working hand in glove with progressive reformers to "illuminate" these practices.

In Chapter One, I describe progressivism as a "set of shared ideas" that crystallized in response to the conditions of industrial modernity. Unchecked capitalism and urban growth produced, among other things, crowded tenements, the injustices of factory labor, and debased industrial products. In addition, the influx of immigrants, Northern migration, and, of course, the increased public presence of women, contributed to what Lawrence Levine calls "the sense of looming chaos" endemic to the early century.[320] To recuperate "progress," then, meant to create a more ordered modernity, one that benefited from both moral reasoning and scientific rationalism. For some—particularly the Evangelical reformers—this meant a return to the rigid social divisions of

[320] Levine, Lawrence, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America , Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, pg. 176.

the previous century and a rejuvenation of Protestant morality. For many women activists, a public culture that operated as an extension of the bourgeois household promised to recuperate progress by "elevating" the ignorant but redeemable masses. And of course, for dance reformers, the recuperation of progress required bodies trained and disciplined to perform a more "civilized" version of modernity.

Curiously, these efforts seemed to pivot on the re-negotiation of gender relations; the metaphor of the bourgeois family (unexpectedly) ties these chapters together. For instance, in Chapter Two "Music, Paternalism and Progress," I argue that complaints about ragtime and jazz music illustrate the link between paternalism and aesthetic production. First, ragtime's invasion of the bourgeois household on sheet music and piano rolls disrupted the ideological functions of domestic music production. Piano rolls both displaced the bourgeois housewife as domestic entertainer, and ushered music associated with brothels and black, working-class cultures into the sanctified spaces of the white parlor. While ragtime certainly did not *cause* domestic disruptions, I argue that its arrival signaled the increasing dissolution of boundaries between public and private spaces; this in turn unsettled a paternal authority contingent on those divisions. Moreover, ragtime's popularization wrested *cultural* authority from the white bourgeoisie, and thus seemed to derail a progress linked to Protestant morality, restraint, and rigid social divisions.

Critics complained that ragtime and jazz lured women from the home and into the promiscuous and heterogeneous spaces of public dance halls. Hence, concerns about early 20th century popular music expressed anxieties about women's participation in public culture. Tirades against the music sometimes conflated the suffrage movement and

its appeals for liberty with the libertine impulses purportedly exacerbated by music and dance. Moreover, a novel public culture that included white women and black men clearly raised fears about miscegenation, both literal and cultural; dire warnings against the effects of "savage" music depict jazz as a black "rapist" lurking under the accoutrement of civilization or just outside the home. In some cases, I suggest, these images also pronounced guilt that lingers in the American, post-colonial imagination. For some critics, the arrival of jazz seemed to signal that western, industrial civilization had returned "the savage;" in popular discourse, jazz raised the specter of repressed "instincts," as well as buried memories of the nation's colonial past.

Finally, efforts aimed at aesthetic "uplift" confirm the degree to which the popularization of black and working-class music threatened a specifically white paternal authority and its contingent stake in aesthetic and cultural production. As I demonstrate, the arrival of ragtime and jazz raised questions about the social, cultural and even genetic origins of America—that is, national *paternity*. Musicians and music critics enthusiastically debated the origins of ragtime and jazz in language fraught with phallic, uterine and procreative metaphors. As the first "native" musical forms, ragtime and jazz frequently were described as the nation's aesthetic progeny. Hence, debates about the origins and future of new music illustrate the link between aesthetic production, cultural authority, and cultural paternalism. Music journals predicted the "coming of the great composer," a father figure who might rescue syncopated pop from its lowly beginnings. Many were satisfied that Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," first performed at the Aeolian Theater in 1926, under the direction of Paul Whiteman, "married" American music into the "proud old family" of the European canon. Hence, some critics described the

"elevation" of jazz music as a kind auditory eugenics program, through which "out breeding" produced a musical forms that well-represented the national character.

Chapter Three, "The Dangers of the Dance Hall" considered how musical *spaces*—working-class dance halls and, later, jazz cabarets and "closed" halls—seemed to disrupt a notion of progress linked to bourgeois *maternalism*. In order to redress the "unsavory" conditions of urban industrialization, women activists vied to create a new public culture that extended the ideals and functions of the bourgeois household. Gentle, maternal guidance and "moral reasoning" promised to counter the injustices created by unchecked capitalism and the "hard" or "tough" logics of an implicitly masculine public culture. The behaviors of working-class girls who frequented dance halls, however, rattled assumptions about women's essential morality, and thus threatened to undermine the arguments that many women activists deployed in order to justify their participation in the public sphere.

In a sense, arguments that dance hall practices merely reflected the "unfair" conditions of urban modernity—rather than the character of the working-girl herself—secured the gender ideologies intrinsic to the dance hall reform movement. These activists argued that the tedium of factory labor drove women to seek excitement in disreputable establishments, and that the trying conditions of urban industrial life made for the "hardened" attitudes. For many reformers, the "masculine" behaviors of working-girls reflected the self-interested "hustle" associated with 20th century capitalism. In addition, some urban activists argued that crowded tenements offered no parlor room for proper courtship and, thus, young women were forced to "entertain" without supervision in the sometimes dangerous public spaces. Their arguments configure popular music as

co-conspirator in the working class halls; some warned that a combination of beer and fast syncopation led young women astray. More significantly, perhaps, music and dances were said to reproduce the iniquities of urban, industrial culture.

Thus, dance hall reformers posited the creation of "wholesome" recreation as a matter of social justice, and specifically, as a matter of gender equality. Dance halls, they argued, constituted a public resource and served an important social function: young women required safe, well-lit and supervised spaces in which to court and to be courted in the absence of proper parlors. Dance hall reforms, then, attempted to create a more orderly and democratic public culture through "rational amusement." Well-managed recreation promised to properly socialize the working girl and to make working-class leisure practices more *visible*. Women reformers, then, created spacious and well-lit "model" dance halls that attempted to cultivate the moral character of both working girls and urban youth in general. Here, ideal proprietors and hostesses acted like extended families, providing dancers with social and moral guidance. The best halls were said to operate quite literally like bourgeois parlors. Hostesses and inspectors supervised working-class courtship rituals and, occasionally, even offered middle-class toiletries such as soaps, powders and accessories. The working class dance hall reforms well-illustrate the ways in which progressive efforts to "rationalize" public space also entailed "bourgeois cultivation" as a means of elevating the unruly urban masses, and especially the working girl.

If dance hall reforms aimed to create a more orderly and implicitly feminine public culture by extending the ideals and social practices of the bourgeois household, they also offered a way for white middle and upper class women to legitimately

participate in the public sphere. For one thing, dance halls became the subject of otherwise unheard debates about what precisely constituted an issue of "public interest." New commercial leisure pushed formerly "private" courtship rituals into public spaces. Generally confined to the private sphere and thus outside the regulations of civic or state interventions, courtship and gender relations now became part of a public debate about the role of municipal government in the "private" lives of its charges. The dance hall reforms may be one of the first instances in which women activists insisted that "private" practices carried political weight and therefore should be subject to state and municipal interventions—first through the regulation of commercial leisure and, second, by extension, in the creation of more equitable social conditions for women. In other words, prior to feminist efforts in the 1960s and 70s that politicized "private" social injustices—domestic abuse, rape, harassment, and so on—dance hall activists made courtship rituals in commercial spaces part of women's political struggle. Arguments in the reform journals and in the popular press situated women activists as the key participants in that public debate. Of course, their efforts also centered on how to facilitate the adoption of specifically white, middle, and upper-class, feminine ideals. This vision of gender equality, then, (not unlike some of the 70's feminists) also inadvertently reproduced race and class inequalities.

In addition, women reformers created new professional roles for themselves that required the specific qualities associated with white middle and upper-class femininity. Activists invented positions for matronly inspectors and hostesses, who operated as the lynchpins of reform efforts. Inspectors were to mediate between the dance hall owners and the interests of the patrons—in other words between private enterprise and the

public—by minding the material and social quality of these new leisure spaces. Hostesses, often described as "sisterly," might supervise and care for the dance halls' youthful charges. In addition, new police academies trained women officers to act as maternal guides, and to enter public spaces in which policemen appeared either too conspicuous or too heavy-handed in their masculine attitudes and methods of intervention. In contrast, the "spiritual" fortitude of women, some argued, allowed them to better and more carefully police the spaces inhabited by the new, heterogeneous public, and to attend to the problems of young women and children specifically. In this way, the "nurturing" role of the policewoman differently imagined the purpose and practice of "law enforcement." Rather than enacting paternalist prohibitions traditionally associated with federal, state and municipal authority, policewomen, like dance hall reformers, hoped to "cultivate" and guide wayward youth.

Ironically, reforms meant to create a more rational and equitable public culture (in the image of the bourgeois household, which, of course, replicated class inequalities) pushed leisure spaces out of sight and beyond the reach of progressive interventions. Dance hall reforms, in fact, gave rise to prohibition, after which many venues (and reputedly the best musicians) moved underground. "Closed" halls and mixed-race cabarets, now hidden in the recesses of the city, only thwarted progressive efforts at urban planning and "rational recreation," which, of course, required supervision. However, loaded descriptions of the post-prohibition dance halls literalized fears about miscegenation and pointed to the ways in which even the efforts of women progressives banked on rigid social divisions. In crowded urban areas and behind secret doors, these

spaces defied the distinctions of class, race and gender to which orderly progress often was hitched.

Implicitly, the "closed" hall with its invisible point of entry suggested that spaces of the city no longer belonged exclusively to the white upper and middle classes. Promiscuous and heterogeneous cabarets, into which white girls reputedly "disappeared," seemed to defy progressive interventions. They also signaled that dance hall reformers had failed to construct a lasting public culture in the image of the bourgeois household. Moreover, descriptions of closed halls in the post-prohibition press demonstrate not only discomfort with white women's participation in public culture, but a general unease about the new social and economic power afforded some African-American communities. Jazz funneled both money and cultural authority to Harlem, Chicago's South Side, and many other areas. Complaints about dance halls "hidden" there appear in tandem with the alarmed observations that African-Americans now owned real estate. Thus, I argue that debates about dance halls and cabarets well-illustrate hegemonic struggles over public spaces and by implication, struggles over the character and "quality" of public culture.

If the popularization of syncopated pop created musical spaces that defied "rational reforms," they also seemed to invite objectionable dance practices that further shook up traditional gender relations and social divisions. In the case of dance reforms, the public itself, its variously raced, classed and gendered bodies, operated as a site of hegemonic struggle. Chapter Four explored, first, the new intimacies created through popular dance. Freed from the orderly group dances of the previous century, couples were able to create their own steps and movements—a liberty that Lewis Erenberg

suggests both mirrored and produced less formal relations between men and women.[321] Thus, reformers complained about the crowded spaces in dance halls and cabarets, and the urban *crowds* who danced too quickly and too closely with one another. For this reason, "modern dancing," again, was said to reflect urban industrial conditions: congestion, chaos, and "tough" attitudes. Moreover, dance halls and dance practices seemed to invite otherwise unprecedented levels of social and physical contact between strangers and other variously coded urban "others." Despite the efforts of dance hall reformers, the practice of "tough" dancing was widely and enthusiastically embraced, from the least reputable saloons to the Grand Ballrooms.

Dance reformers and other activists warned that the new "craze" unraveled social divisions by popularizing postures and gestures previously observed only in brothels and working class halls. The more "democratic" dance halls also housed a mélange of differently raced and classed bodies. In this way ragtime and jazz dance literally embodied the incorporation of social differences. Further, ragtime and jazz dances carried gestural signifiers said to originate on plantations. The cakewalk, for instance, made its way from the plantation south to the Broadway shows, from which urban crowds learned to emulate its basic forms. The widespread adoption of these dances not only rattled the postural divisions of race and class, it gestured towards the threatening possibility of the social and economic incorporation of African-Americans—manifest more obviously in the purchase of urban real estate.

Dance reformers, then, set out to "sanitize" popular dances, and to preserve the distinction of the "white" body. Irene and Vernon Castle's guidebook, *Modern Dancing*,

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[321]Lewis Erenberg, Steppin Out: New York Night Life and the Transformation of American Culture. London: Greenwood Press, 1981, pg. 149.

provides one of the most incisive examples of those efforts. The guidebook demonstrates that Castle dance reforms operated through a kind of gestural eugenics program; dances borrowed from red-light districts and black, working-class cultures underwent a series of "refinements" in order to make them more palatable to both the bourgeoisie and to the wider public. Among other things, Castles reforms required dancers to stand further apart and avoid low dips, and refrain from swinging their arms or kicking their legs. Although they did not explicitly identify with progressive movements, Castle dance reforms fit nicely within the progressive tradition. The Castles hoped to restore a sense of order to public culture by rationalizing popular practices through orderly and well-trained bodies.

Castle dance reforms taught postures, gestures and movements meant to signify "grace," "class" and "refinement." As exhibition performers, the Castles understood dance as a visual art. Thus, they subjected otherwise sensual and embodied experiences to the logics of sight and spectacle. Their public image also offered a vision of new "companionate marriage" and its negotiated gender roles. Vernon Castle clearly banked on his cosmopolitanism and European "class." Irene Castle offered a "modern" version of the "New Woman." She embodied the image of wife-as-pal on which the companionate marriage seemed to pivot. The couple's public marriage, embodied in their playful, "refined" and innocuous style of dancing offered a relatively acceptable alternative to the dissolution of the family that the new music and dance practice seemed to herald. Irene Castle's adolescent good looks made her fame, wealth, and independence appear somewhat less threatening; her companionable appeal also seemed to stave off any implication of adult sexuality. The Castles' public image provided a model for

"modern" gender relations, a renovated version of bourgeois marriage that was both companionable and "high class." Ultimately, I argue that the Castle dance reforms meant to redefine "modern dancing," and thus present another vision of what American modernity might look like.

Received wisdom about music and dance panics suggest that moral outrage predominately involves "youth." My research indicates, however, that the ragtime craze and its controversies centered on adult relationships—on various untoward intimacies and on the reconfiguration of the bourgeois marriage. Complaints about jazz music more often focused on the new "youth" culture, although even the jazz panic produced a significant amount of discourse about badly behaved adults. In any case, at the very moment that the "companionate" marriage seemed to salvage bourgeois gender relations, its offspring ran amok.

The newly expanded public school system, and its unprecedented numbers of non-laboring, somewhat leisurely and often privileged youth, seemed to invite unruly dancing. Progressive reformers initially had high hopes for the nation's schools and for school dances. Some education reformers argued that, like the dance hall, the school gymnasium might provide a space in which to socialize the young properly. However, alarmed reports from the popular press—particularly in Chicago—illustrate that the dance practices of privileged youth made educators and instructors increasingly nervous. Throughout the teens and 1920's, various reform organizations met to address the growing problem of dance delinquency. Upper class youth who "slummed" in cabarets returned to school gymnasiums with bad habits, which they also replicated in the more

respectable dance halls. Here, I argued that complaints about the debaucheries of privileged youth signaled the failures of progress reform efforts.

Shortcomings and Implications for Future Research

Many of the articles cited here were printed in the *New York Times* or the *Chicago Daily Tribune.* My analysis, then, often is limited to specific urban locales and to social practices and public debates that might not have occurred in other areas. Likewise, the conditions of industrial modernity as I describe them may not reflect conditions in other parts of the country. By extension, the "public culture" up for debate here might include only spaces, practices and groups found in Northern cities. My research indicates, however, that other spaces and practices also were subject to progressive reform efforts. For instances, I found several references to the roadhouses that appeared in response to municipal dance hall ordinances and to dance halls similarly situated on rural roads, away from the protective surveillance of dance hall inspectors.

Further, I omitted a number of materials from these arguments for the sake of brevity and coherence, or because I found few references. Arguments about the social and aesthetic value of popular music also took place in education journals. Like the music trade journals cited in Chapter Two, education journals hosted conversations about the value of jazz music, as well as the legitimacy of instruments like the saxophone. For obvious reasons, these magazines were concerned more directly with how to best control the production of knowledge about musical forms and practices. Educators instituted music programs in an effort to counter the purported "decline in taste" associated with syncopated pop, and to refashion the listening habits of the young. For instance, schools

offered “music appreciation” classes that venerated the classical western canon, and taught methods of performance that demanded fidelity to the western notation system. Some schools even instituted state-wide “Music Memory” contests, whereby students recited music trivia and learned to identify by ear segments of the classical repertory. School music programs clearly served ideological purposes in that they monopolized, produced and validated specific kinds of knowledge about music.

As part of the newly expanded public school system, music education also was implicated in the production of proper citizens. Like progressive recreation reforms, education efforts meant to establish a well-designed and “rational” curriculum that in order to socialize American youth properly. Unlike dance halls, however, a mandatory public school system promised educators regular and intensive access to the redeemable “masses”—at least until the eighth grade. Education journals thus facilitated revealing debates about aesthetic values, performance practices, and the education of youth. A study of music education journals might illustrate how music operated in the production of citizenship through the public school systems.

In addition to music education journals, this dissertation excludes the ragtime and jazz controversy as it appeared in the African-American presses. Like the white owned and operated papers and journals, the African-American presses gave voice to concerns about the effects of syncopated music, the dangers of public spaces, and the trouble with licentious dance. Because ragtime and jazz likely originated in African-American communities, many of these complaints actually predate those that appear in the white owned presses. The controversy over “juke” music pronounced some of the same anxieties articulated elsewhere, but the stakes in this debate were quite different. For

many black reformers and Evangelicals, the production and popularization of ragtime and jazz threatened efforts aimed at "racial uplift," and attempts at assimilation that meant to secure a social position for the new black middle-classes. Licentious music and dance were said to interrupt those efforts by reiterating stereotypes about African Americans, and by endangering black communities. Debates about ragtime and jazz in the African-American presses more clearly point to the ways in which music and dance cultures, perhaps prior to their general appropriation, functioned as a kind of counter-public.

Moreover, this dissertation does not explicitly unpack some of the critical theories that inform my readings of these texts. Clearly, an essay on the regulation of dance practices might benefit from a brief introduction to Foucault's ideas about the disciplining of bodies. Similarly, the dance hall reforms might be situated in readings of Henri Leferve's work on the production of space, or David Harvey's thoughtful application of those concepts in his *Spaces of Hope*. Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Sound* also might work to illumine some of the arguments I make in Chapter Two. However, I chose to frame these chapters as a cohesive moral panic about public culture mainly in order to reconnect otherwise disconnected accounts of the ragtime and jazz controversies. In other words, I wanted a coherent and somewhat unified theoretical framework that would illustrate the link between what look like disparate materials.

Finally, I was unable to fully tease out ideas about how music might operate as a technology or, more accurately, a kind of *technē*. I suggested in the Introduction and in Chapter One that music as auditory media may trouble the individuating logics of print. If print technology produced the public culture of the bourgeoisie, and the "ideal public sphere" described by Habermas, then how might music and sound offer another kind of

logic and another kind of public? Moreover, if the "moral panic" perpetuated by early 20th century print media worked to "shape" "define," "label" and "diagnose"—in other words—to create subjects or particular modes of subjectivity through discursive practice, then perhaps music functioned as a competing form of discourse. This begs the question: what sorts of subjectivities are produced by musical discourse?

The idea that music or sound may operate as a technology of the subject has important implications for feminist scholarship as well. In the course of her indictment of contemporary music critics who replicate Plato's "polemics against the body," Susan McClary proposes another angle from which to consider musical effects. She argues that,

> A more productive approach to music—not just pop, but all music, including the ostensibly cerebral canon—would be to focus on its correspondences with the body. Teresa de Lauretis has used the term 'technologies of gender' to refer to the ways in which film and other such media participate in the cultural construction of what it means to be male or female. She argues, in other words, that gender—far from being determined by nature or biology—is produced and shaped by socially discursive practices. I want to propose that music is foremost among "technologies of the body," that it is a site where we learn to experience socially mediated patterns of kinetic energy, being in time, emotions, desire, pleasure and much more.[322]

The "modern" feminine subject often is defined in terms of sight and spectacle. Feminist film theorists debate the possibility of the urban *flaneuse*, but generally understand woman as the object of the modern gaze, constituted in "to-be-looked-at-ness."[323] The

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[322]Susan McClary, "Same as it Ever Was: Youth Culture and Music," in Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture, New York: Routledge, 1994, pg. 33.

[323] See, for instance, Mary Anne Doane, "Technologies Body: Cinematic Vision in Modernity," in A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema, eds. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, pgs. 530-550.

more optimistic accounts of the "modern" feminine subject suggest that she forms through "appearing acts;" making "a spectacle of oneself" constitutes a kind of agency.[324] Most of these theories borrow from European accounts of modernity, and specifically, from Walter Benjamin, who posits the wandering *flaneur* as the embodiment of the modern, urban subject. But urban modernity in America looks and sounds quite different; arguably the "flapper" in all her glorious debauchery remains the figure emblematic to modern, American culture.

Some of the literature that I omitted from this project begins to point to the ways in which music and dance might form subjects differently—not divorced from the logics of sight, but in allegiance with another set of sensibilities. For instance, in his cheeky, 1922 article "Flapper Americana Novissima," G. Stanley Hall, the "father" of American psychoanalysis, reports that the flapper *seems strangely at ease* on the public street. Her meandering gait, as he describes it, mimics the entitled mobility of masculine *flanerie*. Her movements, however, also seem to embody auditory and kinetic sensibilities. For this, Hall credits music and dance. "Let us turn our attention to dancing," he writes, "on which the flapper dotes as probably never before…she dances at noon and at recess in the school gymnasium; and if not in the school, at the restaurants between courses, or in the recreation rooms in factories and stores."[325]

Practiced knowledge of the intimate "toddle" helps her to mitigate crowded conditions. The ability to start and stop abruptly, to turn quickly, or to avoid collision—navigational strategies necessary to the conditions of urban modernity—similarly points

[324] Liz Conor makes this argument in her excellent The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920's, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
[325] "Flapper Americana Novissima," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1922, pgs. 771-780 Ibid., 733.

to a body conditioned through jazz dance. Hall writes, "if she rarely participates in the cakewalk, [the flapper] has a keen sense of ragtime and 'syncopation to the thirty second note,' her nerves are uniquely toned to jazz, with its shocks and discords…its heterogeneous tempos…."[326] Hence, my future research projects will incorporate some of the excess literature otherwise omitted from this project; I plan to mine early twentieth century media for similar evidence about the ways in which music might function as a technology of the subject.

[326] Ibid. 733.

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