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Notes on editors

Andy Bennett is Professor in the Department of Communications, Popular Culture and Film at Brock University in Canada. Prior to studying for his Ph.D. at Durham University, he spent two years in Germany working as a music teacher with the Frankfurt Rockmobil project. He has published articles on aspects of youth culture, popular music and local identity in a number of journals including *British Journal of Sociology*, *Sociology*, *Sociological Review*, *Media Culture and Society* and *Popular Music*. He is author of *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place* (2000, Macmillan) and *Cultures of Popular Music* (2001, Open University Press), editor of *Remembering Woodstock* (2004, Ashgate) and co-editor of *Guitar Cultures* (2001, Berg), *After Subculture* (Palgrave, 2004) and *Music Scenes* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2004). Andy is a former Chair of the UK and Ireland branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) and co-founder of the British Sociological Association Youth Study Group. He is a Faculty Associate of the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University, an Associate of PopULUs, the Centre for the Study of the World's Popular Musics, at Leeds University and a member of the Editorial Boards for the journals *Sociology* and *Leisure Studies*.

Barry Shank is Professor of Comparative Studies at Ohio State University. He is the author of *Dissonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas* (Wesleyan, 1994) and *A Token of My Affection: Greeting Cards and American Business Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2004) as well as numerous articles on popular music, race and popular culture, and theories and methods of American studies. He is an Associate Editor of *American Quarterly*, and has served on the editorial boards of *American Music* and *Popular Music*. His current project is a study of abstraction and embodiment in musical performances that are resistant to fascism. The Long Ryders continue to perform without him.

Jason Toynbee is Lecturer in Media Studies at The Open University. Before becoming an academic in the early 1990s, he was a builder and sometimes a singer too. Jason completed a Ph.D. at Coventry University which he later turned into a book called *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity and Institutions* (2000, Arnold). He has written several other pieces on creativity and music, and is now researching links between copyright, authorship and symbolic form across a number of genres. He is also co-editor of *Analysing Media Texts* (Open University Press, 2006), and a member of the Editorial Group of the journal *Popular Music*.

Notes on contributors

Rick Altman is Professor of Cinema and Comparative Literature at the University of Iowa. He is author of *The American Film Musical* (Indiana University Press, 1999), *Film/Genre* (BFI, 1999), and *Silent Film Sound* (Columbia University Press, 2004). His articles on film sound and Hollywood genres have been translated into over a dozen languages.

Philip Auslander is a Professor in the School of Literature, Communication, and Culture of the Georgia Institute of Technology (US). He is the author most recently of *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (Routledge, 1999) and the forthcoming *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (University of Michigan Press).

Mavis Bayton was a member of Oxford's first all-women rock band in the late 1970s punk period. This experience led her into researching women's popular music-making which culminated in her Ph.D. and then the pioneering book *Frock Rock* (Oxford University Press, 1999). She is currently a tutor at Ruskin College, Oxford, and also a singer-songwriter and one-woman blues performer.

David Brackett is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Music at McGill University, Montreal. His publications include *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1995; reprint University of California Press, 2000) and *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates* (Oxford University Press, 2005). His current work focuses on the relationship between genre and identity in twentieth-century popular music.

Michael Bull is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Film at the University of Sussex and has written widely on sound, music and technology. He is co-editor of *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Berg, 2003) and is presently writing a monograph

entitled *Sound Moves: iPod Culture – an Urban Experience* for Routledge, to be published in 2005. He is Chief Editor of *The Senses and Society* journal.

Tia DeNora teaches sociology at Exeter University. She is author of *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius* (University of California Press, 1995), *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). She is currently doing research on music and science in Beethoven's Vienna and on music, spirituality and transcendence.

Alice Echols is the author of *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin* (University of Minnesota Press, 1990) and *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and Its Aftershocks* (Columbia University Press, 2002). She is an Associate Professor of English at USC and is currently working on *Upside Down: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture*.

Kodwo Eshun writes about the interface between art, music, technology and science fiction. He is author of *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (Quartet, 1999), and is a contributor to, among other publications, *The Wire*, *i-D*, *Spin* and *The Guardian*.

Susan Fast is Associate Professor of Music at McMaster University, Ontario. Her recent work is focused on constructions/representations of identity in popular music performance. She is author of the book *In the Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Simon Frith has been Professor of Film and Media Studies at Stirling University, Scotland, since 1999. Recent publications include *Music and Copyright*, edited (with Lee Marshall) for Edinburgh University Press (2004) and 'What is bad music?' in Christopher J. Washburne and Maiken Derno's *Bad Music* (Routledge, 2004). He chairs the judges of the Mercury Music Prize.

Paul Gilroy is currently Chair of the Department of African American Studies at Yale University. His teaching on questions of race and social theory operates at the junction points between sociological concerns and the humanities. He is researching automotivity and its relationship to consumer culture, and continuing work on the institution of racial orders, especially in colonial territory. Current writing projects involve a consideration of Britain's post-colonial melancholia, given as the 2002 Wellek Library lectures and a survey of New World black musics in the twentieth century.

Andrew Goodwin is Professor and Chair of the Department of Media Studies at the University of San Francisco. He is the author of *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music, Television and Popular Culture* (Routledge, 1993) and is currently completing a novel, *Enjoy the Silence*.

Joanne Gottlieb is currently a social worker who works with adolescents in New York City.

Dai Griffiths is Head of Music at Oxford Brookes University. He has recently published a monograph on Radiohead's *OK Computer*, as well as various chapters, including studies of words in pop songs, cover versions and the history of pop music since punk. His mother knew John Cale's mother, both of them hailing from Garnant in South Wales.

Jocelyne Guilbault is Professor of Ethnomusicology at the Music Department of the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Zouk: World Music in the West Indies* (University of Chicago Press, 1993) and of several articles on theory and methodology in popular music studies. Her current research focuses on the politics and aesthetics of the calypso music scene in the Caribbean and its diaspora.

Daniel Hallencreutz is founder and Managing Director of a research consultancy company called Intersecta AB and is affiliated to the Centre for Research on Innovation and Industrial Dynamics at Uppsala University. He has a D.Phil. in economic geography from the Department of Social and Economic Geography, University of Uppsala, and has research interests in regional development, industrial competitiveness, growth policies and the cultural industries.

Bob Hanke is a sessional Assistant Professor in Communication Studies, and the Joint Graduate Programme in Communication and Culture, at York University, Toronto. He has co-edited a special issue of *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* on technology and culture. Recent solo works include 'For a Political Economy of Indymedia Practice' in the *Canadian Journal of Communication* and 'McLuhan, Virilio and Speed in the Age of Digital Reproduction' in *Marshall McLuhan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* (Routledge, 1998).

David Hesmondhalgh is Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University. He is the author of *The Cultural Industries* (Sage, 2nd edn, 2006), and editor of *Western Music and its Others* (with Georgina Born, University of California Press, 2000), *Popular Music Studies* (with Keith Negus, Arnold 2002), *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity* (with Jessica Evans, Open University Press, 2005) and *Media Production* (Open University Press, 2006).

Rupa Huq is Senior Lecturer in sociology at Kingston University, London. Previously she taught at the University of Manchester. Her book, *Beyond Subculture: Youth and Pop in a Multi-ethnic World*, will be published by Routledge in 2005. Her research interests are combined with being a practitioner of DJing, motherhood and politics.

Keith Kahn-Harris is an Associate Lecturer at the Open University and a freelance research consultant. He has been a visiting fellow at universities and educational institutions in Sweden, Finland, Israel and Australia. He has published a number of articles on Extreme Metal culture and was co-editor (with Andy Bennett) of *After Subculture* (Palgrave, 2004). A full list of his publications can be found at www.kahn-harris.org.

Marjorie D. Kibby is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Culture at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her research publications focus on issues of identity and community online, and in particular on the personal and cultural effects of the use of the Internet in everyday life.

James P. Kraft is Associate Professor of History, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu. He is author of *Stage to Studio: Musicians and the Sound Revolution, 1890–1950* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) and has written extensively in the field of the social and economic history of music.

Dave Laing is a writer and researcher based in London. His books include *The Sound of our Time* (Quadrangle Books, 1969) and *One Chord Wonders* (Open University Press, 1985). He is an editor of the *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* and a member of the editorial board of *Popular Music History*.

Tony Langlois lectures in the School of Media and Performing Arts at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. His published articles are concerned with the cultural politics of music in North Africa and Europe.

Joseph Lanza, the author of *Elevator Music* (St Martin's Press, 1994), was the Executive Producer for the two-disc collection entitled 'Music for TV Dinners'. He also contributes frequently to *Time Life Music*. He has written several other books, the most recent being *Vanilla Pop: Sweet Sounds from Frankie Avalon to ABBA* (Chicago Review Press, 2005).

Susan McClary (Ph.D., Harvard, 1976) specialises in the cultural criticism of music, both the European canon and contemporary popular genres. McClary is author of *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), *Georges Bizet: Carmen* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (University of California Press, 2000), is co-editor with Richard Leppert of *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). She was awarded a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1995.

Tom McCourt is an Assistant Professor of media studies at Fordham University, New York, and the author of *Conflicting Communication Interests in America: The Case of National Public Radio* (Praeger, 1999).

Richard Middleton is Professor of Music at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England. He is the author of *Pop Music and the Blues* (Gollancz, 1972) and *Studying Popular Music* (Open University Press, 1990), editor of *Reading Pop* (Oxford University Press, 2000) and co-editor of *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge, 2004). A new book, *Voicing the Popular*, will be published by Routledge shortly.

Maria Pini completed her Ph.D. on Woman and Contemporary Social Dance Cultures at Goldsmiths College, London. After this, she took up a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Western Sydney where she wrote *Club Cultures and Female Subjectivity: The Move from Home to House* (Palgrave, 2001). Until August 2004, Maria was a Lecturer in the Media and Communications Department at

Goldsmiths College. She has spent the past seven months working on a forthcoming book written with Valerie Walkerdine, on video diaries and auto-ethnography.

Dominic Power is an Associate Professor at the Department of Social and Economic Geography, Uppsala University, Sweden. His research is concerned with regional and industrial competitiveness, and the workings of the cultural industries, in particular the design, fashion and music industries. His most recent book is *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture* (co-edited with Allen J. Scott, Routledge, 2004).

Simon Reynolds writes about pop culture for magazines including *The New York Times*, *Village Voice* and *The Wire*, and posts regularly at Blissblog, <http://blissout.blogspot.com>. His latest book *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978–84* is set for 2005 publication by Faber & Faber (UK/Europe) and by Viking Penguin (North America), with a postpunk website at www.simonreynolds.net.

Tricia Rose is Professor of American Studies at UC Santa Cruz. In addition to *Black Noise* (Wesleyan Press, 1994), she is also co-editor with Andrew Ross of *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture* (Routledge, 1994) and is also the author of *Longing to Tell: Black Women Talk About Sexuality and Intimacy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003). More information on the author can be found at www.triciarose.com.

Eric W. Rothenbuhler is Professor of Communication at Texas A&M University, co-editor of *Media Anthropology* (in print), author of *Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony* (1998), co-editor of *Communication and Community* (2001), and author or co-author of more than fifty articles, chapters, essays, and reviews on media, ritual, community, media industries, popular music, and communication theory.

Helena Simonett received her Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Los Angeles, and is currently teaching at Vanderbilt University, Nashville. She conducted extensive research on Mexican popular music and its transnational diffusion. Her publications include *Banda: Mexican Musical Life across Borders* (Wesleyan University Press, 2001) and *En Sinaloa nació: Historia de la música de banda* (Asociación de Gestores del Patrimonio Histórico y Cultural de Mazatlán, 2004).

Jeff Smith is an Associate Professor and the Director of the Film and Media Studies Program at Washington University in St Louis. He is the author of *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (Columbia University Press, 1998), and is currently at work on an essay on Richard Linklater's film 'School of Rock'.

Richard Smith is Senior Associate Editor of *Gay Times*. He is the author of *Seduced and Abandoned: Essays on Gay Men and Popular Music* (Cassell, 1995), and edited a collection of Kris Kirk's music journalism, *A Boy Called Mary* (Millivres-Prowler, 1999). He has contributed to the books *Drag: A History Of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts* (ed. Roger Baker, Continuum, 1995) and *Intoxication: An Anthology of Stimulant-based Writing* (ed. Jeff Noon, Serpent's Tail, 1998).

Philip Tagg studied music at Cambridge and education at Manchester in the 1960s, and at the same time was also active as a songwriter, arranger and musician in both the 'classical' and 'popular' fields. From 1971 to 1991 he taught music history, analysis, film music and keyboard harmony at the University of Göteborg (Sweden). In 1991 he initiated work on EPMOW (*Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*). From 1993 to 2002 he taught at the University of Liverpool's Institute of Popular Music. He was appointed Senior Professor of Musicology at the Université de Montréal in November 2002.

Paul Théberge is Canada Research Chair in Technological Mediations of Culture, at the Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture, Carleton University, Ottawa, where he teaches courses in music, sound in film, technology and culture. He is presently conducting research on music, the Internet, and processes of globalization.

Sarah Thornton (1965–) published her Ph.D. as a book called *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Polity, 1995) and is co-editor of *The Subcultures Reader* (Routledge, 1997). She writes a monthly pop sociological column for *Art Review* and is working on an ethnography of the contemporary art world.

David Toop is a composer and author. He has published four books: *Rap Attack* (Serpent's Tail, 1999), *Ocean of Sound* (Serpent's Tail, 2001), *Exotica* and *Haunted Weather* (Serpent's Tail, 2004). In 2000, he curated 'Sonic Boom: the Art of Sound' for London's Hayward Gallery. His first album was released on Brian Eno's Obscure label in 1975; since 1995 he has released seven solo CDs. He is currently an AHRB Research Fellow in the Creative and Performing Arts, based at the University of the Arts, London.

William Tsitsos teaches Sociology at the University of Arizona.

Steve Waksman is Assistant Professor of Music and American Studies at Smith College, Wolverhampton, MA. His research and teaching interests are in the history of US popular culture – especially music, but also film, television and literature – during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in the intersection of race, gender and sexuality. In 1998, his dissertation, 'Instruments of desire: the electric guitar and the shaping of musical experience', won the Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize awarded by the American Studies Association; the project is now a book published by Harvard University Press in 1999. Currently, he is writing an interpretive history of heavy metal and punk rock, tentatively titled 'The noise of youth: rethinking rock through the metal/punk continuum'.

Gayle Wald teaches English at The George Washington University. In addition to riot grrrl, she has published on boy bands, 'girl' performers and blue-eyed soul. Her current book project, forthcoming from Beacon, is *Music in the Air*, about the gospel singer-guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

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and local communities as well as the presence of the friends or the crew of the musicians in rap videos. But perhaps the foremost expression of the specificity of hip-hop identity lies in the mobilisation of style as an intensely personal and individual enunciation of resistance to the political context in which hip-hop developed. The competition over style remains a forceful means of individuation in a society that still denies full membership to peoples of colour.

Paul Gilroy

'JEWELS BROUGHT FROM BONDAGE'

Black music and the politics of authenticity"

EXAMINING THE PLACE OF MUSIC in the black Atlantic world means surveying the self-understanding articulated by the musicians who have made it, the symbolic use to which their music is put by other black artists and writers, and the social relations that have produced and reproduced the unique expressive culture in which music comprises a central and even foundational element. I want to propose that the possible commonality of post-slave, black cultural forms be approached via several related problems that converge in the analysis of black musics and their supporting social relations. One particularly valuable pathway into this is provided by the distinctive patterns of language use that characterise the contrasting populations of the modern, Western, African diaspora. The oral character of the cultural settings in which diaspora musics have developed presupposes a distinctive relationship to the body – an idea expressed with exactly the right amount of impatience by Glissant:

It is nothing new to declare that for us music, gesture, dance are forms of communication, just as important as the gift of speech. This is how we first managed to emerge from the plantation: aesthetic form in our cultures must be shaped from these oral structures.

My main concern in this chapter is less with the formal attributes of these syncretic expressive cultures than with the problem of how critical, evaluative, axiological, (anti)aesthetic judgements on them can be made and with the place of ethnicity and authenticity within these judgements. What special analytical problems arise if a style, genre or particular performance of music is identified as being expressive of the absolute essence of the group that produced it? What contradictions appear in the transmission and adaptation of this cultural expression by other diaspora populations, and how will they be resolved? How does the hemispheric

displacement and global dissemination of black music get reflected in localised traditions of critical writing, and, once the music is perceived as a world phenomenon, what value is placed upon its origins, particularly if they come into opposition against further mutations produced during its contingent loops and fractal trajectories? Where music is thought to be emblematic and constitutive of racial difference rather than just associated with it, how is music used to specify general issues pertaining to the problem of racial authenticity and the consequent self-identity of the ethnic group? Thinking about music – a non-representational, non-conceptual form – raises aspects of embodied subjectivity that are not reducible to the cognitive and the ethical.

Working on the contemporary forms of black expressive culture involves struggling with one problem in particular. It is the puzzle of what analytic status should be given to the variation within black communities and between black cultures which their musical habits reveal. The tensions produced by attempts to compare or evaluate differing black cultural formations can be summed up in the following question: How are we to think critically about artistic products and aesthetic codes that, though they may be traceable back to one distinct location, have been changed either by the passage of time or by their displacement, relocation or dissemination through networks of communication and cultural exchange? This question serves as a receptacle for several even more awkward issues. They include the unity and differentiation of the creative black self, the vexed matter of black particularity, and the role of cultural expression in its formation and reproduction.

In the face of the conspicuous differentiation and proliferation of black cultural styles and genres, a new analytic orthodoxy has begun to grow. In the name of anti-essentialism and theoretical rigour, it suggests that since black particularity is socially and historically constructed, and plurality has become inescapable, the pursuit of any unifying dynamic or underlying structure of feeling in contemporary black cultures is utterly misplaced. The attempt to locate the cultural practices, motifs or political agendas that might connect the dispersed and divided blacks of the New World and of Europe with each other, and even with Africa, is dismissed as essentialism, or idealism, or both. The alternative position sketched out in the rest of this chapter offers a tentative rebuke to that orthodoxy which I regard as premature in its dismissal of the problem of theorising black identity. I suggest that weighing the similarities and differences between black cultures remains an urgent concern.

The Jubilee Singers and the transatlantic route

I want to illustrate the arguments outlined above by briefly bringing forward some concrete historical instances in which the musical traditions of the black Atlantic world can be seen to have acquired a special political valency and in which the idea of authentic racial culture has been either contested or symptomatically overlooked. These examples are simultaneously both national, in that they had a direct impact on life in Britain, and diasporic, in that they tell us something fundamental about the limits of that national perspective. They are not, of course, the only examples I could have chosen. They have been selected somewhat at random, although I hope that the fact that they span a century will be taken as further evidence for the

existence of fractal patterns of cultural and political affiliation. In rather different ways, these examples reflect the special position of Britain within the black Atlantic world, standing at the apex of the semi-triangular structure that saw commodities and people shipped to and fro across the ocean.

The first instance relates to the visits by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers to England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland in the early 1870s under the philanthropic patronage of the Earl of Shaftesbury. The Fisk Singers have a profound historical importance because they were the first group to perform spirituals on a public platform, offering this form of black music as popular culture. The worldwide travels of the Fisk Jubilee Singers provide a little known but nonetheless important example of the difficulties that, from the earliest point, attended the passage of African-American folk forms into the emergent popular-cultural industries of the overdeveloped countries. At that time, the status of the Jubilee Singers's art was further complicated by the prominence and popularity of minstrelsy. One review of the earliest performances by the group was headlined 'Negro Minstrelsy in Church – Novel Religious Exercise,' while another made much of the fact that this band of Negro minstrels were, in fact, 'genuine negroes.' Doug Seroff quotes another contemporary American review of a concert by the group: 'Those who have only heard the burnt cork caricatures of negro minstrelsy have not the slightest conception of what it really is.' Similar problems arose in the response of European audiences and critics:

From the first the Jubilee music was more or less of a puzzle to the critics; and even among those who sympathised with their mission there was no little difference of opinion as to the artistic merit of their entertainments. Some could not understand the reason for enjoying so thoroughly as almost everyone did these simple unpretending songs.

The choir initially struggled to win an audience for black music produced by blacks from a constituency that had been created by 50 years of 'blackface' entertainment. Needless to say, the aesthetic and political tensions involved in establishing the credibility and appeal of their own novel brand of black cultural expression were not confined to the concert halls. Practical problems arose in the mechanics of touring when innkeepers refused the group lodgings, having taken their bookings on the assumption that they were a company of 'nigger minstrels' – white. One landlord did not discover that 'their faces were coloured by their creator and not by burnt cork' until the singers were firmly established in their bedrooms. He still turned them into the street.

The choir's progress was predictably dogged by controversies over the relative value of their work when compared to the output of the white 'minstrel' performers. The Fisk troupe also encountered the ambivalence and embarrassment of black audiences unsure or uneasy about serious, sacred music being displayed to audiences conditioned by the hateful antics of Zip Coon, Jim Crow and their odious supporting cast. Understandably, blacks were protective of their unique musical culture and fearful of how it might be changed by being forced to compete on the new terrain of popular culture against the absurd representations of blackness offered by minstrelsy's pantomime dramatisation of white supremacy.

In explicit opposition to minstrelsy, which was becoming an established element in popular culture by this time, the Fisk Singers constructed an aura of seriousness around their activities and projected the memory of slavery outwards as the means to make their musical performances intelligible and pleasurable. The choir had taken to the road seven years after the founding of their Alma Mater to raise funds. They produced books to supplement the income from their concert performances, and these volumes ran to more than 60,000 copies sold between 1873 and the end of the century. Interestingly, these publications included a general historical account of Fisk and its struggles, some unusual autobiographical statements from the members of the choir, and the music and lyrics of between 104 and 139 songs from their extensive repertoire.

The Fisk Singers's texts describe an austere Queen Victoria listening to 'John Brown's Body' 'with manifest pleasure,' the Prince of Wales requesting 'No More Auction Block for Me,' and the choir being waited upon by Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone after their servants had been dismissed. These images are important, although the history of the choir's performances to enormous working-class audiences in British cities may be more valuable to beleaguered contemporary anti-racism which is struggling to find precedents and to escape the strictures of its own apparent novelty. It is clear that for their liberal patrons the music and song of the Fisk Jubilee Singers offered an opportunity to feel closer to God and to redemption, while the memory of slavery recovered by their performances entrenched the feelings of moral rectitude that flowed from the commitment to political reform for which the imagery of elevation from slavery was emblematic long after emancipation.

Almost one hundred years after the Jubilee Singers set sail from Boston for England on the Cunard ship *Batavia*, another black American musician made the transatlantic journey to London. Jimi Hendrix's importance in the history of African-American popular music has increased since his untimely death in 1970. The European triumph that paved the way for Hendrix's American successes presents another interesting but rather different case of the political aesthetics implicated in representations of racial authenticity. A seasoned, if ill-disciplined, rhythm-and-blues sideman, Hendrix was reinvented as the essential image of what English audiences felt a black American performer should be: wild, sexual, hedonistic and dangerous. His biographers agree that the updated minstrel antics of his shows became a fetter on his creativity and that the irrepressible issue of racial politics intervened bitterly in his fluctuating relationships with the English musicians who provided the bizarre backdrop to his blues-rooted creativity. Jimi's shifting relationship to black cultural forms and political movements caused substantial problems when he returned to play in the US and was denounced as a 'white nigger' by some of the Black Power activists who could not fathom his choices in opting to cultivate an almost exclusively white, pop audience that found the minstrel stance a positive inducement to engage with his transgressive persona, if not his music. Charles Shaar Murray quotes the following diagnosis of Hendrix's success by the rival English blues guitarist Eric Clapton:

You know English people have a very big thing towards a spade. They really love that magic thing. They all fall for that kind of thing. Everybody and his brother in England still think that spades have big dicks. And Jimi came over and exploited that to the limit . . . and everybody fell for it.

Sexuality and authenticity have been intertwined in the history of Western culture for several hundred years. The overt sexuality of Hendrix's neo-minstrel buffoonery seems to have been received as a sign of his authentic blackness by the white rock audiences on which his burgeoning pop career was so solidly based. Whether or not Hendrix's early performances were parodic of the minstrel role or undeniable confirmation of its enduring potency, his negotiation of its vestigial codes points to the antagonism between different local definitions of what blackness entailed, and to the combined and uneven character of black cultural development. The complexity of his relationship to the blues and his fluctuating commitment to the politics of racial protest which had set American cities on fire during this period extend and underscore this point. The creative opposition in his work between obvious reverence for blues-based traditions and an assertively high-tech, futuristic spirituality distils a wider conflict not simply between pre-modern or anti-modern and the modern, but between the contending definitions of authenticity that are appropriate to black cultural creation on its passage into international pop commodification. Hendrix would later rationalise his ambivalence towards both blackness and America through the nomadic ideology of the gypsy that appeared in his work as an interestingly perverse accompaniment to the decision to play funkier and more politically engaged music with an all-black band.

Authenticity is not so hotly contested in my third example of transnational, diasporic cultural innovation centred on London. It is provided by a song that circulated across the black Atlantic network rather than an individual artist or group. It is included here precisely because the right to borrow, reconstruct and redeploy cultural fragments drawn from other black settings was not thought to be a problem by those who produced and used the music. This is also a more contemporary example, although it relates to the piece 'I'm So Proud,' originally written and performed by the Chicagoan vocal trio the Impressions, at the peak of their artistic and commercial success in the mid-1960s. The group's sixties hits such as 'Gypsy Woman,' 'Grow Closer Together,' 'Minstrel and Queen,' and 'People Get Ready' were extremely popular among blacks in Britain and in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, the male vocal trio format popularised by the band inaugurated a distinct genre within the vernacular musical form that would eventually be marketed internationally as reggae.

A new version of the Impression 'I'm So Proud' topped the reggae charts in Britain during 1990. Retitled 'Proud of Mandela,' it was performed in interperformative tandem by the Brummie toaster Macka B and the Lovers' Rock singer Kofi who had produced her own version of the tune closely patterned on another, soft soul version that had been issued by the American singer Deniece Williams in 1983. I want to make no special claims for the formal, musical merits of this record, but I think it is a useful example in that it brings Africa, America, Europe and the Caribbean seamlessly together. It was produced in Britain by the children of Caribbean and African settlers from raw materials supplied by black Chicago, but filtered through Kingstonian sensibility in order to pay tribute to a black hero whose global significance lies beyond the limits of his partial South African citizenship and the impossible national identity that goes with it. The very least that this music and its history can offer us today is an analogy for comprehending the lines of affiliation and association that take the idea of the diaspora beyond its symbolic status as the

fragmentary opposite of some imputed racial essence. Thus, foregrounding the role of music allows us to see England, or more accurately London, as an important junction point or crossroads on the webbed pathways of black Atlantic political culture. It is revealed to be a place where, by virtue of local factors such as the informality of racial segregation, the configuration of class relations and the contingency of linguistic convergences, global phenomena such as anti-colonial and emancipationist political formations are still being sustained, reproduced and amplified. This process of fusion and intermixture is recognised as an enhancement to black cultural production by the black public who make use of it. Its authenticity or artificiality was not thought to be a problem partly because it was content to remain inside the hidden spaces of the black cultural underground and also because of the difference made by the invocation of Nelson Mandela.

The name of Mandela became a paternal talisman that could suspend and refocus intraracial differences that might prove difficult and even embarrassing in other circumstances. His release from prison projected an unchallenged, patriarchal voice, a voice rooted in the most intense political conflict between blacks and whites on this planet, the final frontier of white supremacy on the African continent, out across the relay systems of the black Atlantic. The heroic, redemptive authenticity that enveloped the image of Mandela in these locations was nicely deconstructed in a speech that he himself made in Detroit on his first visit to the US. Mandela answered the Africentric expectations of his audience by confiding that he had found solace in listening to Motown music while in jail on Robben Island. Quoting from Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On?' he explained, 'When we were in prison, we appreciated and obviously listened to the sound of Detroit.' The purist idea of one-way flow of African culture from East to West was instantly revealed to be absurd. The global dimensions of diaspora dialogue were momentarily visible and, as his casual words lit up the black Atlantic landscape like a flash of lightning on a summer night, the value of music as the principal symbol of racial authenticity was simultaneously confirmed and placed in question.

The problem of cultural origins and authenticity to which these examples point has persisted and assumed an enhanced significance as mass culture has acquired new technological bases and black music has become a truly global phenomenon. It has taken on greater proportions as original, folk or local expressions of black culture have been identified as authentic and positively evaluated for that reason, while subsequent hemispheric or global manifestations of the same cultural forms have been dismissed as inauthentic and therefore lacking in cultural or aesthetic value precisely because of their distance (supposed or actual) from a readily identifiable point of origin.

Soul music and the making of anti-anti-essentialism

Critical dialogue and debate on these questions of identity and culture currently stage a confrontation between two loosely organised perspectives that, in opposing each other, have become locked in an entirely fruitless relationship of mutual interdependency. Both positions are represented in contemporary discussions of black music, and both contribute to staging a conversation between those who see the

music as the primary means to explore critically and reproduce politically the necessary ethnic essence of blackness, and those who would dispute the existence of any such unifying organic phenomenon. Wherever the confrontation between these views is staged, it takes the basic form of conflict between a tendency focused by some variety of exceptionalist claim (usually, though not always, of a nationalist nature) and another more avowedly pluralistic stance that is decidedly sceptical of the desire to totalise black culture, let alone to make the social dynamics of cultural integration synonymous with the practice of nation building and the project of racial emancipation in Africa and elsewhere.

The syncretic complexity of black expressive cultures alone supplies powerful reasons for resisting the idea that an untouched, pristine Africinity resides inside these forms, working a powerful magic of alterity in order to trigger repeatedly the perception of absolute identity. Following the lead established long ago by Leroi Jones, I believe it is possible to approach the music as a changing rather than an unchanging same. Today, this involves the difficult task of striving to comprehend the reproduction of cultural traditions not in the unproblematic transmission of a fixed essence through time, but in the breaks and interruptions that suggest that the invocation of tradition that may itself be a distinct though covert, response to the destabilising flux of the post-contemporary world. New traditions have been invented in the jaws of modern experience and new conceptions of modernity produced in the long shadow of our enduring traditions – the African ones and the ones forged from the slave experience that the black vernacular so powerfully and actively remembers. This labour also necessitates far closer attention to the rituals of performance that provide prima facie evidence of linkage between black cultures.

Because the self-identity, political culture and grounded aesthetics that distinguish black communities have often been constructed through their music and the broader cultural and philosophical meanings that flow from its production, circulation and consumption, music is especially important in breaking the inertia that arises in the unhappy polar opposition between a squeamish, nationalist essentialism and a sceptical, saturnalian pluralism that makes the impure world of politics literally unthinkable. The preeminence of music within the diverse black communities of the Atlantic diaspora is itself an important element in their essential connectedness. But the histories of borrowing, displacement, transformation and continued reinscription that the musical culture encloses are a living legacy that should not be reified in the primary symbol of the diaspora and then employed as an alternative to the recurrent appeal of fixity and rootedness.

Music and its rituals can be used to create a model whereby identity can be understood neither as a fixed essence nor as a vague and utterly contingent construction to be reinvented by the will and whim of aesthetes, symbolists and language gamers. Black identity is not simply a social and political category to be used or abandoned according to the extent to which the rhetoric that supports and legitimises it is persuasive or institutionally powerful. Whatever the radical constructionists may say, it is lived as a coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self. Although it is often felt to be natural and spontaneous, it remains the outcome of practical activity: language, gesture, bodily significations, desires. We can use Foucault's insightful comments to illuminate this necessarily political relationship.

They point towards an anti-anti-essentialism that sees racialised subjectivity as the product of the social practices that supposedly derive from it.

Rather than seeing [the modern soul] as the reactivated remnants of an ideology one would see it as the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body. It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of power that is exercised.

These significations can be condensed in the process of musical performance, although it does not, of course, monopolise them. In the black Atlantic context, they produce the imaginary effect of an internal racial core or essence by acting on the body through the specific mechanisms of identification and recognition that are produced in the intimate interaction of performer and crowd. This reciprocal relationship can serve as an ideal communicative situation even when the original makers of the music and its eventual consumers are separated in space and time, or divided by the technologies of sound reproduction and the commodity form that their art has sought to resist.

Jocelyne Guilbault

ZOUK AND THE ISLES OF THE CARIBBEES

The legacy of a colonial past

After geography there is the shaping force of history.

Gordon K. Lewis

MARTINIQUE, GUADELOUPE, ST LUCIA, and Dominica share a similar colonial past. All four have been under both French and English rule at various points in their history, and all four have been populated mainly by blacks, descendants of the African slaves brought over by the two colonial powers. All have suffered from class and racial discrimination and linguistic domination.

Zouk is the creation of black, Creole-speaking Antillean musicians. Their positions of prestige and power in the local media and their commercial success on the international market assume great significance for the islands' Creole speakers in a postcolonial society. In countries molded by the plantation system, the prominence of zouk artists on the local and world scene can be viewed, especially in the French *départements*, as a major contribution toward improving the position of Antillean artists in the class and racial power structure.

Eric Virgal is one of Martinique's leading zouk singers. In the following excerpt from a conversation with him recorded in French at Fort de-France in July 1989, I asked him what had attracted him to zouk:

Why zouk? Because it's truly *me*. The feeling we have about zouk is that it reflects our way of walking, laughing, dreaming, and speaking. All of our Creoleness is in zouk, all of our everyday life . . . In zouk I have had a chance to discover, and to perform, a kind of music that sells well, that helps me to be recognized, that I can identify with, and that I am not *ashamed* to put on stage. For example, when I was using Haitian