

PRAY FOR THE LIGHTS TO GO OUT:  
THE PORTRAYAL OF BLACKS IN KANSAS CITY PUBLISHED SHEET MUSIC

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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2011

ABSTRACT

This study examines sixteen pieces of sheet music published in Kansas City, Missouri, dating from the 1880s through the 1930s. The pieces are located in the LaBudde Special Collections at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and also the Kansas City public library Missouri Valley Special Collections and include lullabies, minstrel caricatures, and a series on deacons. The lyrics and musical demarcation are analyzed for the demonstrated perception in each piece. Analysis includes genre along with associations and connotations with the songs' intended audience and venue. Dialect implications, positive or negative, are used to identify composer intention and intended audience.

Local historical context, particularly race relations, is integrated into the study as well as the history of the Black image and that image's ties to the minstrel tradition. The portrayal of the Black community as exotic and yet native is explored along with the political reasons behind music propaganda. Special attention is given to the portrayal of Black women as it relates to societal domestic roles. The study also compares Kansas City's portrayal to the national one, with a focus on what is missing from the collection.



## APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled “Pray for the Lights to Go Out: The Portrayal of Blacks in Kansas City Published Sheet Music,” presented by AnnaMarie Ogunmola, candidate for the Master of Music degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A culture's history is a mosaic of interests, perceptions, and narratives. Sheet music from the early twentieth century offers a unique perspective of the popular culture and as Charles Hiroshi Garrett states music "becomes a crucial source of embedded knowledge, demonstrating how music not only reflects and shapes its cultural environment but also conveys information that may not be available in any other form."<sup>1</sup> Playing from sheet music was a main source of home entertainment, especially for the White middleclass, capturing that culture's sense of humor, attitudes, and desires. Examining this music's lyrical content reveals a history of popular perception. This study focuses on the portrayed image of African Americans in the lyrics of sheet music published in Kansas City. Kansas City's output of sheet music indicates the commercially accepted images of African Americans and all the local social and cultural implications of those images.

In spring 2010, I undertook an assignment for my Advanced Research and Bibliography course to search through the sheet music archives in the University of Missouri-Kansas City's LaBudde Special Collections. The sheet music collection contains sheet music published around World War I, World War II, and in Kansas City from 1874 through 1966. My research partner and I chose to focus on the sheet music published in and about Kansas City. While perusing the collection, the portrayal of African Americans caught my eye, and I became interested in the collection's connection to history. In

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 11.

particular, I was drawn to the snapshot of Kansas City's portrayed image of African Americans as an angle for in-depth research. Although the cover art was revealing, the lyrics, and the musical characterizations embedded there, piqued my interest. With these parameters in place, I identified ten songs in the LaBudde Special Collection that met my criteria. In order to cover a broader spectrum, I also searched the Kansas City Public Library Missouri Valley Room archives of sheet music published in Kansas City where I found six more candidates for analysis. The sixteen songs possess publishing dates from the 1890s to the 1930s.

The songs are a part of a broader Kansas City history of race relations. Charles Coulter's book *Take Up the Black Man's Burden* (2006) and Sherry Lamb Schirmer's book *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City 1900-1960* (2002) examine Kansas City race relations through archival research. Coulter's book focuses on Reconstruction through World War Two, the time period of the examined songs, while personalizing the Black perspective. Job positions with their trials and associated status are discussed at length, particularly pastors who are the subject of three of the examined songs. Schirmer focuses more on the collective ethnic groups than the individual in examining the growth of segregated housing in Kansas City. Schirmer offers insight into a shift in White attitudes toward Blacks around the turn of the century. Both Schirmer and Coulter cite the Black run newspaper *The Call*, copies of which are at the Kansas City Public Library. The newspaper offers insight into Kansas City race relations from a Black perspective.

The broader national history of cultural Black imagery from the White and Black perspective also provides an essential context for the examined songs. While Schirmer and Coulter's books offer some local images, Nathan Huggins discusses the nationally accepted images in his 1971 book *The Harlem Renaissance*. Huggins describes minstrel caricatures, the direct ancestor of the popular song depictions. The atmosphere of post-World War I reveals the changing attitudes and perceptions of the Black and White culture. The documentary *Ethnic Notions* further examines accepted minstrel caricatures, their wide cultural reach, and the attitudes influencing the caricatures.

A better understanding of the genres contained in the collection is needed to understand the lyrical language and musical characteristics. Almost all of the sixteen pieces demonstrate ragtime characteristics, which William J. Schafer outlines in his 1977 publication *The Art of Ragtime*, but Schafer focuses on the piano form. Edward Berlin and Ortiz Walton look more closely at the popular ragtime songs in *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* and *Black, White and Blue: A Sociological Survey of the Use and Misuse of Afro-American Music*, respectively. Walton outlines important cultural contributions of popular ragtime song in the first chapter of *Black, White and Blue* and the rest of the book covers the origins of the blues. Berlin details the origins of ragtime along with the cultural controversies that erupted. Sam Dennison offers even more cultural background to ragtime and popular ragtime forms in his 1982 book *Scandalize My Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music*. The book begins with the first examples of Black imagery in 1684, and ends with a discussion of popular music around World War Two. Full lyric examples fill the pages and demonstrate the changing imagery.

All sixteen songs examined are defined partly through the use of dialect. Albert Tricomi's 2006 article "Dialect and Identity in Harriet Jacob's Autobiography and Other Slave Narratives" examines the use of dialect in literature before and after the Civil War along with its social implications for both White and Black readers and authors. Lisa Minnick's 2004 book *Dialect and Dichotomy: Literary Representations of African American Speech* also examines dialect in literature, but focuses on the Black use of dialect. In his 2004 article "Chinatown, Whose Chinatown? Defining America's Borders with Musical Orientalism," Charles Garrett examines dialect along with musical, lyrical, and cover art depictions of Asian Americans in sheet music. The dialect portrayal of another minority in the same medium offers valuable insight and comparisons.

The discussion of the sixteen pieces of sheet music is divided into seven chapters. After this introduction, the second chapter focuses on race relations in Kansas City from the 1880s through just before World War Two. The chapter also overviews the prevalent local and national Black imagery of the time period along with the images' history. There is an emphasis on the notion that African Americans were exotic despite generations of residency.

The third chapter discusses genre delineation of the sixteen pieces, along with the defining characteristics of that genre. The social implications of ragtime are examined on a national and local level. The chapter also describes the venue in which these pieces were performed, the years the styles were at their peak, and motivations behind their appeal.

Chapter four singles out Black women to discuss their social status in Kansas City and the stereotypes imposed on them via the songs. Local stereotypes are compared with t

national ones, as origins and affected images are presented. The fifth chapter examines the time period's use of dialect and its social implications. The White motivation to compose and sing behind a Black mask is compared with the Black composer's reasons for choosing to write in dialect. Also, the chapter compares the Black dialect associations with the dialect associations of other minorities represented in Kansas City published sheet music.

The sixth chapter analyzes the sixteen pieces using the information from the preceding chapters. The analysis also explores connections to the composers' or publishers' output. Some musical analysis examines lyrical characterization and genre placement. The seventh chapter studies Kansas City published sheet music for representations of Blacks that are missing. This includes a comparison with White and Black institutions, as well as a lack of civic representation. A conclusion proposes the importance of this study. The examined music is placed in historical perspective, further study is proposed, and connections are made towards inter-disciplinary study.

Overall the study strives to capture a turbulent time in Kansas City's race relations through a previously ignored medium. The study gives a local and a broader national context to view the small snapshots of popular culture found in these sixteen pieces of sheet music.

## CHAPTER 2

### KANSAS CITY AND NATIONAL RACE RELATIONS 1870-1930

An examination of the historical racial climate of Kansas City alongside national African American portrayal aids in understanding the motivations behind the sheet music compositions. Reconstruction changed the geographic and social conditions of Kansas City as well as White images of Blacks. One of the biggest impetuses for change was the mere increased presence of Blacks in the area.

Cultural Black portrayals were especially important at the turn of the century as World War One brought new definitions of society. Nathan Huggins calls the war a “puberty rite for people the world over,” which “produced a phenomenal race consciousness and race assertion.”<sup>2</sup> Nationality and racial identity are based on uncontrollable factors and inescapable birthrights, linking racial and national identities in the White mind. The White racial identity developed synonymously with the emerging national identity, erasing the Black community from the idea of nation.<sup>3</sup> For Whites racial identity and consciousness were tied to European ideals, while for Blacks the new racial consciousness meant a sense of racial pride and a demand for social justice.<sup>4</sup> As a new nationalism took shape, the White desire to maintain society was in direct opposition to the Black desire for social progress, creating a time rife for confrontations. Blacks had to be

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<sup>2</sup> Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 83.

<sup>3</sup> Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 74.

<sup>4</sup> Charles E. Coulter, *Take Up the Black Man's Burden* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 2.

an Other against which Whites united in order to truly form the White identity through racial opposition. Songs offered simultaneity and a uniting force for the White population to cement attitudes toward the Black community.<sup>5</sup> The imagined Black community portrayed through song could then provide the opposition for defining the White nation. As Dennison states, “Cocksure and fiercely independent, Americans reacted favorably to songs which asserted American superiority over real or imagined foes.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1860s Kansas City, the only Black presence was 3,944 slaves located in the Independence and Westport areas.<sup>7</sup> Reconstruction quickly increased the Black population. Blacks stopped in Kansas City en route to Kansas, as Black families formed an 1879 mass exodus from Mississippi and Louisiana hoping to escape segregation.<sup>8</sup> The success of the railroad in the 1880s grew Kansas City’s overall population as it became the crossroad of the United States.<sup>9</sup> The railroad increased the stockyard and packing house business, attracting Black men with possible work.<sup>10</sup> There were four main packing houses: Swift, Cudahy, Wilson, and Armour, one of the largest packing houses in the world.<sup>11</sup> Blacks represented 20 percent of the total work force in the four packing houses

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<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 145.

<sup>6</sup> Sam Dennison, *Scandalize my Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Coulter, 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

in 1917, a presence large enough to be noticeable.<sup>12</sup> Most of the Black work force were young, single, renters-an unstable character considered inherent.<sup>13</sup> The packing houses attracted Blacks to the urban setting where job competition and encroaching housing soon added greater tension.<sup>14</sup>

Without slavery, racism sought new justifications and fuel as increased urbanization forced Black and White communities into proximity. In 1896, *Plessy vs. Ferguson* legitimized segregation throughout the nation, while scholars like Madison Grant rushed to “prove” Blacks intellectual inferiority to Whites.<sup>15</sup> In Kansas City democratic politicians fanned racism’s fires pushing for Black disenfranchisement. Blacks voted predominately Republican, leading the Democratic party to publish diatribes on Black intellectual inferiority, questioning their ability to vote responsibly.<sup>16</sup> This dynamic did not last long as the Republican party continually broke promises to Black constituents, attracting Blacks to Tom Pendergast’s infamous Democratic political machine.<sup>17</sup> This led to more racism as Blacks were associated with Pendergast’s dens of vice. The situation only worsened when a 1925 law allowed for a city manager position. Pendergast gained even more control over Kansas City through his city manager appointee Henry F. McElroy.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>13</sup> Coulter, 65.

<sup>14</sup> Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: the Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 117.

<sup>15</sup> Sherry Lamb Schirmer, *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900-1960* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 57.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 65.

Pendergast soon had clubs, brothels, and betting houses all along the Black East side.<sup>18</sup>

One of the pieces in the sheet music collection, *She's a Mean Job* (1921) aligns the Black woman of the song with betting, smoking, and a propensity for spending time on the street, activities that reflect Pendergast's Kansas City.

The mere presence of Blacks created racial tension throughout the city. As the middle class developed in Kansas City, so did urban renewal and a concern with moral disorder.<sup>19</sup>

Blacks were intimidated into living in certain areas, primarily along Eighteenth Street and Vine Street on the East side of the city. As early as 1911, Blacks who moved outside the community boundaries faced dynamite bombings from the White community.<sup>20</sup> The practice continued through the 1930s, accelerating between 1921 and 1928 with as many as seven bombings a year.<sup>21</sup> Legal actions such as covenants and statutes further discouraged Blacks from leaving Vine Street.<sup>22</sup>

Economic conditions dictated poor housing and sanitary conditions in the Black community as families were forced to live with relatives or strangers in overcrowded homes.<sup>23</sup> Water availability was one of many problems; Schirmer notes, "typical apartment buildings provided water to all their occupants from a single hydrant in a

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<sup>18</sup>Schirmer, 125.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>20</sup> Coulter, 250.

<sup>21</sup> Schirmer, 101.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>23</sup> Coulter, 269.

hallway.”<sup>24</sup> The noticeably poor conditions inspired condemnation instead of sympathy from the White community. Social and civics researchers linked character with physical environment, encouraging the belief that poor conditions are chosen, not a symptom of unfortunate economic conditions.<sup>25</sup> These conditions also existed in the homes of poor Whites, but that fact was conveniently ignored, demonstrating an association of vice with the Black race image, not Black actions.<sup>26</sup>

Blacks’ attempts to better economic and living conditions were just as evident, but viewed as a threat to the White community instead of as community betterment. Labor actions and political activism were visible in Black schools and churches. The segregation of churches fostered Black clergy leadership, one of the few leadership positions available to Black men.<sup>27</sup> For example, the 1920 Vine Street Baptist pastor, D.A. Holmes, successfully protested the Kansas City children’s parade, which had relegated Black children to the back. Holmes also fought for equal teacher pay, fought against police brutality, and fought against the Pendergast political machine.<sup>28</sup> In December 1921, G.W. Reed, another Black minister, led packing house walkouts to protest pay cuts.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Schirmer, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>26</sup> Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 158.

<sup>27</sup> Coulter, 87.

<sup>28</sup> Coulter, 89.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 68.

Though that walkout was unsuccessful, the clergy's threat to White authority triggered attacks on their character as witnessed in the "Deacon Series" sheet music.

Media maligning of the Black population was a popular political device. Political leaders, especially of the democratic party, used the newspaper to inspire outrage and fear against the Black population. The most exploited fear was interaction between Black men and White women. Even White prisoners were to be protected, as newspaper articles condemned the presence of Black male guards in female prisons;<sup>30</sup> the White woman prisoner was not to be subject to Black men viewing her bathe or subject to living in close quarters with Black women.<sup>31</sup> Media scare tactics included threats that the Black vote would lead to integrated schools, which in turn would lead to inter-marriage.<sup>32</sup> Inter-marriage was the mother of all fears, rousing political leaders to refer to it as "abhorrent" and "nauseating."<sup>33</sup> Even the *Republican Journal* began to worry that the mere suggestion of sexual intimacy between Black men and White women threatened the "refinement and wholesome morality of a community of home-loving and women-respecting citizens."<sup>34</sup> Fear of the Black race largely came from fear of "mongrelization" and distortion of the White race, along with the sanctity of White women.<sup>35</sup> The Black community commented on the overkill against intermarriage in the media and in the law. For example, the

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<sup>30</sup> Schirmer, 67.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>35</sup> Dennison, 250.

Reverend Franklin gave a speech to the Black Ministerial Alliance citing sixteen states with relatively few cases of intermarriage, although the states had no law against intermarriage whereas in the states with intermarriage laws the number of mulattoes was increasing.<sup>36</sup>

Fear and racial tensions resulted in both overt and subtle examples of racism throughout the city, originating in the target audience of the examined sheet music, the White middleclass. The main form of racism was segregation in schools, theaters, public venues, and all major unions.<sup>37</sup> During the 1903 Kansas City floods, the Black and Mexican communities were sent to segregated, inferior health care facilities, continuing segregation even in times of crisis.<sup>38</sup> Businesses often segregated or denied service, blaming an imagined White consumer who would be uncomfortable with Blacks around: “The ‘myth of the bigoted patron’ proved an effective device for justifying discrimination and deflecting blacks’ protests.”<sup>39</sup> For example, in 1914 Jenkins, the city’s major sheet music company, denied Blacks access to the listening room, citing a projected White consumer outrage.<sup>40</sup> The imagined patron also kept Blacks off the Kansas City public golf course as Charles Franklin reported in 1931: “The second step has been taken toward official Jim-crowding in KC, the Negroes who asked a separate golf course, have returned

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<sup>36</sup> Chester A. Franklin, “Editorial,” *The Call*, March 19, 1926.

<sup>37</sup> Coulter, 53.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> Schirmer, 152.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

to the park board suggesting a site. St. Louis, our Missouri neighbor to the east, finds it feasible to let Negroes use its municipal links in Forest Park, proving there can be common park conveniences and peace between the races.”<sup>41</sup> There was also a general lack of respect for servants in the home who were addressed by their first names with no title, demonstrating that many forms of racism were subtle.<sup>42</sup> Small acts still communicated racism to the Black community as Charles Stark of the *Sun* wrote, “The enemies of the race are sitting up at night scheming how to ‘politely’ and ‘graciously’ enslave us.”<sup>43</sup>

Sometimes the racist attitudes turned violent. In 1926, a young Black man was suspected of raping a White woman and a White mob chased him down with dogs. The Black population was outraged at the denial of a fair trial: “We asked the investigation of the killing of a Negro boy by a white policeman and we have accepted the verdict. White people must accept the same kind of intervention by the regularly constituted authorities, even though the alleged crime is rape.”<sup>44</sup> The anti-crime campaign of the 1920s increased police brutality and further separated the law for Blacks and the law for Whites. “Police squads, acting without warrants, often raided blacks’ homes, where they ransacked apartments, wrecked furniture, and ripped up walls and floors in a search for stolen property. Blacks suspected of even minor infractions regularly received beatings in the

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<sup>41</sup> Chester A. Franklin, “Editorial,” *The Call*, June 5, 1931.

<sup>42</sup> Coulter, 84.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Stark, “Editorial,” *Kansas City Sun*, August, 8, 1914.

<sup>44</sup> Chester A. Franklin, “Editorial,” *The Call*, April 16, 1926.

course of questioning at the station house.”<sup>45</sup> At the same time, Pendergast owned the police force and was able to protect dens of vice in the Black area.<sup>46</sup> Mostly racist attitudes were expressed behind closed doors in hidden tones. For example, a 1911 meeting of White leaders hides a racist code embedded in obscure language.<sup>47</sup> The hidden attitudes manifested themselves in action and in the popular entertainment, including sheet music; racist attitudes held by Kansas City Whites are uncovered in popular music.

Popular songs “drummed” hostility and ridiculed the Black race, teaching the nation, White and Black, how to view Blacks.<sup>48</sup> As the *South Pacific* song “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught” expresses, “You’ve got to be taught to hate and fear, you’ve got to be taught from year to year, it’s got to be drummed in your dear little ear, you’ve got to be carefully taught.”

T. D. Rice created the character Jim Crow, first documented in published sheet music in 1829. Rice spurred minstrelsy and in his act cemented the unfavorable portrayal of Blacks.<sup>49</sup> Rice took as inspiration a crippled man dancing a shuffling dance where the feet did not cross, and White consumers soon adopted his representation as truth.<sup>50</sup> During slavery the general portrayal was a Black dependent with a bent towards thieving, lying,

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<sup>45</sup> Schirmer, 138.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>48</sup> Dennison, xii.

<sup>49</sup> Dennison, 48.

<sup>50</sup> *Ethnic Notions*, DVD, directed by Marion Riggs (San Francisco, CA: Signifyin’ Works, 2004).

gambling, and gluttony among other vices.<sup>51</sup> More specifically, the child-like *sambo* character, which minstrelsy fostered, worked all day and played all night with a natural desire to sing and dance, as witnessed in the Kansas City song *Honey O!*.<sup>52</sup> The White imitator *zip coon* character soon followed. *Zip coon* demonstrated White superiority, as the *zip coon* failed to be the polished White man he imitated demonstrated in *Ah's Done Seen a Callicker Mule*.<sup>53</sup> The female *mammy* was physically unattractive with a dark complexion, girth, and a handkerchief tied around her hair. Her lack of beauty betrays White women's fear and reality that their female Black house-slaves attracted the attention and desires of their husbands. *Mammy's* character was fiercely loyal to her White masters and docile to their wishes. All of these minstrel portrayals defended slavery when abolitionists were fiercely fighting against it.<sup>54</sup>

After the emancipation proclamation, minstrel caricatures continued, along with new portrayals criticizing the new social construct. America's past became an imagined Eden, regardless of former atrocities. The Old South, Dixie, came to represent the Golden days when slaves were happily cared for, as characterized in the "come back" songs *Summer Time in Dixie* (1899) and *'Pon My Soul* (1933) in the Kansas City sheet music collection. Slavery as an institution represented the longed-for and long-past glorious nation, much like some current communities might laud the imagined "moral" 1950s

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<sup>51</sup> Dennison, xii.

<sup>52</sup> *Ethnic Notions*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*.

despite the lack of civil rights then allotted the Black community. The Dixie-loving ex-slave is portrayed as devoted to “massa” and longs for his carefree and happy days as a slave.<sup>55</sup> The former slave is supposed to desire to enjoy freedom in the very spot he was enslaved. A *loyal Tom*, an older man, is always the imagined singer of “come back” songs, because young Black men were a physical threat to the system of oppression and to young White women.<sup>56</sup> As such, young Black men were portrayed as physical brutes capable of great violence, demonstrated in the collections with songs like *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights* and the Deacon Series. This bestial character politicized the destruction of social order with the disappearance of slavery, and justified White oppression and violence in order to restore that social order.<sup>57</sup> Minstrelsy was the White defense and answer to the new social construct. “The stereotype-mask defined the Afro-American as white Americans chose to see him; outside the mask the black man was either invisible or threatening.”<sup>58</sup>

World War One spun dreams of equality for Blacks who served their country, but those dreams upset the White population, and overt racism became nationally acceptable starting in 1919.<sup>59</sup> This shift fueled Black caricatures in popular song, cartoons, stage shows, figurines, and even food products such as Uncle Ben’s rice and Aunt Jemima

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<sup>55</sup> Dennison, 260.

<sup>56</sup> *Ethnic Notions*.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Huggins, 261.

<sup>59</sup> *Ethnic Notions*.

pancake mix still on grocery shelves today. The portrayal elicited a mixed response from the Black community. Many Black intellectuals distanced themselves from caricatures, denying Black culture for White culture,<sup>60</sup> making it safe to assume the coon song representation embarrassed and offended this portion of the Black community. The negative representations triggered a self-consciousness Black community, which strove to disprove the caricatures. As Huggins explains, “Every act of a Negro that came to public attention had emotive connotations far beyond the significance of the act itself.”<sup>61</sup> In Kansas City, Black leaders called for their brethren to avoid violence and mistreatment of women, aware the White populace would sensationalize examples of Black vice.<sup>62</sup> This is not to say that the Black population never enjoyed the coon caricatures. Ethnic humor allowed persons of that community to make fun of cultural behavior and at the same time be superior to it.<sup>63</sup> The Black audience assumed superiority to the caricature through recognition of the identity.<sup>64</sup> On the whole, though, Huggins asserts that the caricatures were still demeaning and, “truth to tell it was laughing to keep from crying.”<sup>65</sup>

Caricatures caused identity controversies for both races, but so did the media which promoted them. Throughout the era, popular music was a White conquest of Black originated ragtime.

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<sup>60</sup> Huggins, 62.

<sup>61</sup> Huggins., 141.

<sup>62</sup> Schirmer, 141.

<sup>63</sup> *Ethnic Notions*.

<sup>64</sup> Huggins, 259.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

## CHAPTER 3

### RAGTIME AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

“Ragtime effected a total musical revolution, the first great impact of black folk culture on the dominant white middle-class culture of America.”<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the early 1900s, Ragtime was the sound of popular music and coon songs were a popular sub-genre. Coon songs entertained and presented an image of Black Americans favorable to a White audience, who constantly sought to assert dominance. The presence of the genre in Kansas City’s sheet music offers a glimpse into the history of race relations in the city. While ragtime is primarily remembered for the classic piano contributions of Missouri composer Scott Joplin, “songs were the most conspicuous species of ragtime.”<sup>2</sup> Almost every piece in this study falls under the overarching category of ragtime songs or coon songs, the earliest sub-genre of ragtime songs.<sup>3</sup>

There was and is some debate about just what a “rag” is. As late as 1964, David Ewen, a popular music researcher, wrote “ragtime was nothing more than the persistent use of syncopation.”<sup>4</sup> Ragtime expert William Schafer dismisses this oversimplification and defines ragtime as “a formation, an organization of folk melodies and musical techniques into a brief and fairly simple quadrille-like structure, written down, and designed to be played as written on the piano.” This refers to the classical piano rag, but fails to define the popular rag songs.

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedel, *The Art of Ragtime* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), xi.

<sup>2</sup> Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> David Ewen, *The Life and Death of Tin Pan Alley* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1964), 169.

While syncopation dominates the songs, other factors such as an emphasis of beats two and four are pervasive. The coon song tunes were billed as genuine Black melodies, but most of these claims have been dismissed as the melodies more closely resemble folk music from European origins.

Ragtime already existed in minstrel and vaudeville shows, but acquired its name in the 1890s.<sup>5</sup> At the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago ragtime was revealed to the masses and its popularity quickly spread.<sup>6</sup> In 1896, the first authenticated publication applying the word "ragtime" was published in M. Witmark's coon-song editions.<sup>7</sup> Coon songs characterized Black life in a manner meant as comic through the caricature depictions established by minstrelsy. Black vernacular dialect was a defining feature of this characterization.<sup>8</sup> Edwin Berlin describes the lyrical content: "Generally the themes of coon-song lyrics can be summarized as: violence (especially with a razor), dishonesty, greed, gambling, shiftlessness, cowardliness, and sexual promiscuity."<sup>9</sup> The popularity of coon songs spread from the 1890s through 1910,<sup>10</sup> yet minstrel caricatures did not become taboo until the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> Nine of the sixteen examined pieces fall after the 1910 date, but the defining features including

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<sup>5</sup> Berlin, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>8</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Ragtime" (by Sam Dennison), <http://www.grovemusic.com/> (accessed October 10, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Berlin, 33.

<sup>10</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Ragtime" (by Sam Dennison), <http://www.grovemusic.com/> (accessed October 10, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> *Ethnic Notions*, DVD, directed by Marion Riggs, (San Francisco, CA: Signifyin' Works, 2004).

caricature, dialect, syncopation, and the emphasis on beats two and four are present. Coon songs may have fallen out of fashion, but in Kansas City they were still being published as late as 1933.

Part of ragtime song's popularity stemmed from the economic and political climate of the time. In the 1890s economic depression and revolution threatened America, pushing Americans toward escapism.<sup>12</sup> Coon songs offered escape on several levels. The Black culture was exotic to the White middleclass, offering a view into another world. The view was even safer, because a majority of coon songs came from White composers. As Kevin Phinney expressed, "Time and again, America has shown its love for black culture—especially Black music—but most often when presented by white artists."<sup>13</sup> Even rap singer Eminem expressed this phenomena in his 2002 song *Without Me* in the lyrics:

I am the worst thing since Elvis Presley  
to do black music so selfishly  
and used it to get myself wealthy.  
Hey! There's a concept that works.

A White audience enjoyed "Black" music presented through a White medium in coon songs, just as the White audience enjoyed Black culture through blackface in minstrelsy.

Adopting a different persona in coon songs offered an escape into a different culture and a different set of social rules for the performer and the listener. Coon songs allowed Whites to sing about sexuality, vice, and violence when normally those subjects would be taboo. As David Ewen put it, "ragtime talked about the six days of the week that the Negro

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<sup>12</sup> Ortiz Walton, *Music: Black, White and Blue: A Sociological Survey of the Use and Misuse of Afro-American Music* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972), 42.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Phinney, *Souled American: How Black Music Transformed White Culture* (New York: Billboard Books, 2005), 25.

spiritual ignored.”<sup>14</sup> For example, in the 1916 *Pray for the Lights to Go Out*, sex is hinted at in the lyrics, “All that he could hear way down there in the dark, was Baby Honey, turtle dove.” *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights* (1898) depicts violence in the lyrics, “I laid dat a niggah on de shelf; Guess I didn’t put de rollers under him. When I gets mad it ain’t no fun, Ise a thousan’ times worse dan a gatlin’ gun.” Vice is hinted at in *She’s a Mean Job* (1921) in the lyrics, “And though I never heard that she would bet, yet once she stopped the races the horses hid their faces.” Even in the small cross-section of Kansas City published pieces, references to sexuality, vice, and violence are prevalent.

Coon songs also present the Black man as an enviable burden to the White man.<sup>15</sup> The White listener was offered escape through the “easy” life under the White man’s patronage that coon songs purported. In a different way this portrayal offered escape to a Black audience, especially in Kansas City where the majority of Blacks worked long hours at hard labor; for example, in 1917, Kansas City Blacks made up 20 percent of the working force in the four packing houses.<sup>16</sup> The Black character of the coon songs represented a man clever enough to escape the weary work struggle of the common Black man.

Perhaps the ultimate portrayal of the Black man as the White man’s burden is in the “come back” songs, a sub-category of the coon song genre. “Come back” songs offered an escape into an imagined past and a reconciliation between Northern and Southern Whites. The idea of the sympathetic Black character needing White supervision began in the 1820s as part

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<sup>14</sup> Ewen, 169.

<sup>15</sup> Schafer, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Charles E. Coulter, *Take Up the Black Man’s Burden* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 61.

of Southern economic propaganda.<sup>17</sup> After slavery was abolished, “come back” songs depicted an older ex-slave who wished he could return to Dixie and to the “comforts” of slavery. Northern Whites accepted this genre as an attempt at reconciliation and perhaps a longing for the time before the Civil War.

This song type brings to light another possible reason for coon song’s popularity. After the Civil War, Whites (especially Southern Whites) were afraid of Black retaliation and struggled to maintain dominance. Coon songs depicted Blacks as comic and contained them in stereotypical roles as an inferior Other. Controlling the Black image through entertainment offered solace to the White mind.

Sheet music provided nightly entertainment for the White middleclass. As blues origin researcher Ortiz Walton wrote, “Sheet music appealed primarily to the social-entertainment needs of the American family. The family activities coalesced around the piano, and fulfilled a function that is now performed by the television set.”<sup>18</sup> There were up to twenty-four sheet music companies in Kansas City before the 1930s, along with vanity publishers where composers paid for their own works to be published in hopes of the piece becoming the next big hit.<sup>19</sup> Sheet music was a powerful medium where coon songs were prevalent for at least a decade. There was a high demand for rags as an alternative to the classical repertoire. Major Kansas City publishers printed almost no classical works, such as Chopin, instead bowing to

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<sup>17</sup> Sam Dennison, *Scandalize my Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 18.

<sup>18</sup> Ortiz Walton, *Music: Black, White and Blue: A Sociological Survey of the Use and Misuse of Afro-American Music* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972), 44.

<sup>19</sup> Peter A Munstedt, “Kansas City Music Publishing: The First Fifty Years,” *American Music* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 376.

popular tastes.<sup>20</sup> Finding an audience was so important that once publishers and composers saw a song formula that worked, they produced a thousand more pieces just like it.<sup>21</sup> Newspapers and magazines even cashed in on the fad, publishing weekly or monthly sheet music supplements,<sup>22</sup> including the examined piece *Honey O!* published as a supplement in the *Kansas City Star*. The popularity and mass production of “Black” music to a White audience quickly met with controversy.

Cultural leaders had a split reception to this burgeoning fad. Promoters cited ragtime as a national sound separating American culture from European.<sup>23</sup> Yet these cultural independents cited the style’s popularity in Europe to validate ragtime as a true “art music.” Detractors protested the morality of the music, based almost exclusively on the music’s Black origins. Ragtime was described as “symbolic of the primitive morality and perceptible moral limitations of the negro type.”<sup>24</sup> The detractors felt ragtime was unwholesome and full of basic degeneracy that offended civilized moral values, the intellect, and even the body.<sup>25</sup> Parallels can be seen in the controversy which surrounded Elvis Presley and Marshal Mathers (Eminem), who both brought “Black” music to a White audience. Despite or perhaps because of this controversy, ragtime songs dominated the popular music for almost two decades.

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<sup>20</sup> Munstedt, 379.

<sup>21</sup> Schafer, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Munstedt, 379.

<sup>23</sup> Berlin, 44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 43.

Lullabies are a less controversial genre depicting Blacks in the collections. Two of the songs are lullabies in the sense that they indicate a female singer singing a child to sleep. *Little Brown Baby Mine* meets other textbook characteristics, such as a descending line and wail effects.<sup>26</sup> Syncopation is traded for a triple meter, waltz effect and gentle lyrics of sleep are meant to lull the child to sleep. On the other hand, *Shut Yoah Eyes* is full of syncopations and rough language that cajoles and threatens the child to sleep. The syncopated style, language, and stereotypical caricature suggest a coon song more than a lullaby. Of the sixteen songs examined, only *Little Brown Baby Mine* evades a coon song label.

## Venues

The sixteen pieces of sheet music examined in this study were most likely heard on stage before the songs were published for public consumption. The presence of lyrics alone indicates theatrical purposes, as lyrics were first added to ragtime to bring it to the stage.<sup>27</sup> The first-person characterizations and story-telling in the songs further indicate theatrics.

Theaters such as the Grand Opera House, the Orpheum theater, and the Mainstreet theater regularly programmed traveling troupes performing coon songs.<sup>28</sup> These acts and theaters were popular from the early 1890s to the mid-1920s, until movies and other leisure activities began to dominate the entertainment business.<sup>29</sup> These dates coincide with the

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<sup>26</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Lullaby" (by James Porter), <http://www.grovemusic.com/> (accessed February 17, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Dennison, 348.

<sup>28</sup> Felicia Hardison Londré, *The Enchanted Years of the Stage : Kansas City at the Crossroads of American Theater, 1870-1930* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 252.

<sup>29</sup> Londré, 220.

majority of the sixteen pieces in the Kansas City collection. The venues' audiences were predominantly White families attending "popular price" shows available to a wide economic spectrum,<sup>30</sup> however, The Orpheum theater on 1212 Baltimore opened in 1914, advertising a second balcony reserved for negroes along with a separate entrance and Black staff, revealing a Black audience.<sup>31</sup>

There is also a short performance history available for some of the pieces. The popular Black minstrel performer Bert Williams regularly sang two of the Deacon series pieces, *Somebody's Done Me Wrong* and *Pray for the Lights to Go Out*, in his act.<sup>32</sup> Williams made documented appearances in Kansas City with George Walker in 1904, 1906, and 1908<sup>33</sup> and could have performed in the city with the Ziegfield Follies during his 1910-1919 run with the group.<sup>34</sup>

Although the examined songs might have had a stage life, sheet music was still the main dissemination of the songs. Vanity publishers, meaning hopeful local composers, likely never received performance promotion, but hoped to achieve fame purely through the sheet music. Songs in the examined collection like *Who Hoodooed Me?*, *Mournin' Fer You* and *Ah's Done See'd Er Callicker Mule* are composer published, and although they were likely

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>31</sup> There was more than one Orpheum theater in Kansas City. Londré, 230.

<sup>32</sup> Dennison, 386.

<sup>33</sup> Londré, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Camille F. Forbes, *Introducing Bert Williams* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2008), 200.

not performed outside of individual homes, the songs still represent Kansas City attitudes and accepted caricatures of the time.

The portrayal of Black women was a particularly popular song subject. Caricatures in these songs justified White male crime to the White consciousness and defined White middleclass womanhood through binary opposition.

## CHAPTER 4

### PORTRAYALS OF BLACK WOMEN

The portrayal of Black women in the Kansas City Sheet Music collection is a convoluted mixture of paradoxes reflecting the complicated attitudes between the White and Black population in the United States. For the White male population, the close proximity of the Other in female form (the Black woman) contributed to intense desire twisted with revulsion, and the White female population found a definition of womanhood in binary opposition to the Black woman Other. Sheet music reveals how the White middleclass fostered the inner perceptions to serve their domestic and political needs.

White men were confronted with the presence of a sort of exotic woman, one who was at the same time attainable under the institution of slavery. Black women fit the definition of exotic only in some respects.<sup>1</sup> To be an Other in itself holds exotic connotations, especially a female Other as the gender and culture exhibit an “us” versus “them” mentality.<sup>2</sup> The repulsion of an Other easily transforms the forbidden into desire, which Linda Austern asserts is most easily expressed in music: “The Western imagination has long considered music a phantasmic language through which the unspeakably alien may be evoked, and through which the exotic and the feminized erotic have the capacity to unite in forbidden and dangerous desire.”<sup>3</sup> Black women proved a subject both alien and

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<sup>1</sup> Black women were a more native exotic, much like Hungarian gypsies who were praised for their special talents such as musicianship and fortune telling, but they were to remain oppressed in the larger society.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Phyllis Austern, “Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises: The Exotic, the Erotic and the Feminine,” in *The Exotic in Western Music*, Jonathan Bellman ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

appealing to the White males around them. The term “exotic” also associates women with a primal nature and a capacity for special powers, like the seductive reach of the sirens. Black women were believed to be talented seductresses and were associated with primal needs to excuse slavery and oppression. White men’s ability to completely dominate a Black woman without repercussions demonstrates exoticism as the Other is overcome, in this case the Other of gender and race.<sup>4</sup> In these aspects Black women met a White man’s desire for the exotic, but there was something different about this inter-relation.

Exotic portrayals are prevalent throughout the early 1900s, but the other exotic women are treated as untainted “normal” loves. For example, the Asian woman depicted in the Kansas City published song *A Song of the Orient* (1922) sings of missing her love as the night wind sings, with no sexual undertones.<sup>5</sup> Native American women, the geographically closer exotic, are also portrayed through the White ideals of love, as in the song *Amora* (1913) with the lyrics, “She blushed so sweetly when his love tale he told, waited discreetly with the answer of old.”<sup>6</sup> Law and convention further separate Black women from other exotic women. A White man could legally marry a Native American woman while marrying a Black woman was illegal.<sup>7</sup> Marriage meant acknowledgement of offspring, which Black women painfully were denied. The law and society considered

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<sup>4</sup> Austern, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Sexualized images of Asian women in sheet music exist, but Black women are always treated as sexual in the coon songs.

<sup>6</sup> *Amora’s* music was composed by Lucien Denzi and the words were written by Thomas B. Roberts.

<sup>7</sup> Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 83.

mulatto children Black until the child's appearance was so White it was embarrassing to attach the Black label.<sup>8</sup> In Kansas City that convention manifested in a 1910 law forbidding marriage between Whites and mulattoes with one-eighth Black blood.<sup>9</sup> The classification of mulatto offspring as Black allowed White men to deny the intermixture, demonstrating an attitude of deviancy towards sexual relations with Black women.<sup>10</sup>

White men's attraction to Black women goes beyond the exotic appeal. In his 1974 book *The White Man's Burden*, Winthrop Jordan explains the White men's conflicting emotions of desire and revulsion, viewing Black women as humans and yet different through race.<sup>11</sup> The creation of a stereotype referred to as the *jezebel* excused the White man's desire despite his revulsion. The *jezebel* thought with her libido and was seen as "inherently debased, sex-crazed, greedy, tricky, threatening, and out to seek revenge against White society."<sup>12</sup> The nationally popular song *Coal Black Rose* by White composer George Washington Dixon cemented the *jezebel* stereotype in song around 1828.<sup>13</sup> The song portrays a fickle, sensuous Negress who attracts through her sex and

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<sup>8</sup> Jordan., 85.

<sup>9</sup> Sherry Lamb Schirmer, *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900-1960* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 80.

<sup>10</sup> Jordan, 86.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>12</sup> Julia S. Jordan-Zachery, *Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 40.

<sup>13</sup> Sam Dennison, *Scandalize my Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 36.

repels through her color.<sup>14</sup> During slavery the notion of Black women as fickle seductresses existed, excusing the White man's own fickle nature (as he fluctuated between slave women and his wife) and diminishing his culpability, as he is powerless against the Black women's seductive powers. As Jordan wrote, "If she was *that* lascivious-well, a man could scarcely be blamed for succumbing against overwhelming odds."<sup>15</sup> The presence of the *jezebel* stereotype in Kansas City is especially evident in the 1921 song *She's a Mean Job*. The Black woman is described as "always flirting" and seductive in the lyrics, "When she trips her dainty feet, Men fall prostrate on the street." The *jezebel* portrayal further attracted White males as the Antebellum period and the nineteenth century shared a Victorian view of White womanhood. The nineteenth-century idea of womanhood equated sexual desire with a debase nature.<sup>16</sup> This meant White women were on a pedestal of chaste virtue, which caused some White males to satisfy sexual desires with Black women whom society denied their wives' pedestal.<sup>17</sup> The fickle characteristic of the *jezebel* excused the White male for his sexual encounters and allowed the plantation owner to facilitate Black relationships to create new slaves and destroy those same relationships through sales. *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* (1901) from Kansas City, laments the Black woman's fickle heart, as the singer wonders what she will

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<sup>14</sup> Dennison., 38.

<sup>15</sup> Jordan, 90.

<sup>16</sup> Jordan-Zachary, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Jordan, 77.

do without him “when the cold, cold wind begins to blow.” The lyrics, “I used to be a picture card in your deck, Now I am a deuce,” emphasize the woman’s inconstant nature.

Further justification for the *jezebel* stereotype stems from Black women doing work traditionally done by men and the lack of male protection.<sup>18</sup> For example, in Kansas City during the early 1900s Black women worked in the packing houses, the most tedious and demeaning work available, in order to provide for their families.<sup>19</sup> Black men were emasculated through the eyes of White society as their women worked and suffered sexual attacks. White males denied Black men the patriarch role of protection and provision through economics and unequal treatment under the law. Black women had no recourse against White sexual aggression and neither did patriarchal Black men have recourse to protect Black women.

The lust for Black women was partly justified in the White male mind through the imagined lust Black men had for White women.<sup>20</sup> This fear was predicated on three main tenants: revolt against White oppression would take the form of sexual aggression; the White man’s own lust for the opposing race; and, the prevalent notions of Black mens’ sexual prowess. Before and after slavery Whites constantly lived in fear of Black retaliation against oppression and mistreatment; the soiling of White women was the feared outcome. This fear is evident in the controversial 1915 movie *Birth of a Nation*. The film portrays a hostile Black take over, with a mulatto trying to marry the White

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<sup>18</sup> Jordan-Zachary, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Charles E Coulter, *Take Up the Black Man’s Burden* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Jordan, 80.

heroine. In the film, White women jump off cliffs to protect their virtue from Black men. Kansas City was in tune with the spirit of the film: after the 1919 *Birth of a Nation* screening, two black homes were burned and a church was dynamited.<sup>21</sup> At a later screening in May 1921, a few African Americans passed out pamphlets against the Ku Klux Klan in front of a theater playing *Birth of a Nation*. They were arrested and convicted, until the conviction was overturned six months later.<sup>22</sup>

The practice of castration further highlights the White fear of sexual aggression. In the mid-1700s many states had a castration punishment on the books for rape against White women.<sup>23</sup> Although this practice fell out of favor in the eighteenth century, lynching brought the tradition back.<sup>24</sup> In Kansas City the fear manifested in frequent arrests of light-skinned Black women in the company of dark-skinned men until it was proven she was in fact Black, although there was no law against inter-racial consorting other than marriage.<sup>25</sup> White men knew what they themselves were capable of with Black women and naturally feared Black men would have the same thoughts and actions toward their wives and daughters.<sup>26</sup> The thought was that not only could Black men behave similarly to White men, but were capable of worse and might satisfy White wives better than their husbands. This belief originated in the late eighteenth century with the notion

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<sup>21</sup> Schirmer, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Coulter, 43.

<sup>23</sup> Jordan, 82.

<sup>24</sup> Fortunately there are no recorded lynching incidents in Kansas City.

<sup>25</sup> Schirmer, 128.

<sup>26</sup> Jordan, 81.

that Black men were exceptionally well endowed.<sup>27</sup> Anatomy studies, especially those of Charles White, validated this notion and associated Black men with hyper-sexuality.<sup>28</sup> The Deacon series in the Kansas City collection portrays even the Black clergy as hyper-sexualized, ready to fall from grace for a pretty face, as in the *Pray for the Lights to Go Out* lyrics, “He feels himself a slippin’ grabs the first girl near.” The Black man was a threat because he caused the White man insecurity and jealousy, which the domination of Black women helped nullify.

This show of dominance became especially important to the White race as reconstruction created new domestic spheres. Reconstruction finally allowed Black men and women to marry and to participate in the socially recognized family structure. It also “legitimized men’s rights to protect their families and women’s demands to that protection.”<sup>29</sup> The White community would not tolerate these new rights as demonstrated in certain pieces of Kansas City sheet music. In Kansas City undermining the sanctity of Black marriage was still important as late as 1926 as evidenced in the song *Who Hoodooed Me?* The second verse of the song depicts a man who feels marriage has cursed him: “The day that I got married, Thru the process of the law, They surely got the papers mixed, The worst I ever saw. They gave me a dog’s license, Put the collar on to stay, I know

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<sup>27</sup> The opposite was believed of Native American sexual anatomy, which perhaps explains the view that they were non-threatening and the women were okay to marry.

<sup>28</sup> Jordan, 199.

<sup>29</sup> Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 18.

because I've always lived, A dog's life since that day." Marriage is portrayed as a shackle to the Black population and impossible to happily maintain.

In a more violent means than popular music, the domination and rape of Black women served political purposes as White men demonstrated Black men's inability to protect their women. The rape of Black women, sanctioned by the *jezebel* stereotype, removed male protection and undermined the domestic Black home. Rape was also a crime against property, as a women's sexuality and virtue belonged first to her father and then to her husband.<sup>30</sup> A White man raping a Black woman further demonstrated control over Black property with no fear of legal recourse. For example, in 1930 Kansas City the White grocer Aaron D. Baker invited a seventeen-year-old Black girl to clean his house for a party. There was no party and Baker proceeded to rape the young woman. When she brought in the police Baker confessed, yet his case was postponed five times and the grand jury failed to indict him.<sup>31</sup> The law would not protect Black women from White men. If a Black woman acted too uppity, White men could put her in her place without fear of retaliation; at the same time White men could demean the Black men who could not protect her. Rape further perpetuated the *jezebel* stereotype in a vicious cycle. As Sherry Shirmer stated, "the incidence of rape proved that Black women lacked moral virtue, while their presumed lack of virtue made it impossible to prove rape or claim protection from attack."<sup>32</sup> Rape was not the only form of mistreatment the *jezebel* stereotype justified.

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<sup>30</sup> Edwards, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Chester A. Franklin, "Editorial," *The Call*, March 13, 1931.

<sup>32</sup> Schirmer, 86.

Laws against inter-marriage allowed White men to maintain continual Black sexual conquests with no legal responsibilities or duties to care for resulting offspring.<sup>33</sup> Keeping a Black woman in a concubine-like status was justified through her presumed immorality. In another cyclical stereotype, a single woman with children was labeled promiscuous and vulnerable to attacks on her person and character.

The *jezebel* stereotype was the bad Black woman compared to the virtuous White woman, but also to the “good” *mammy* figure. The *mammy* was the more prevalent stereotype during slavery, depicting the Black woman, working within and part of the White household, as cook and caretaker. This imagined figure was fiercely loyal to the White family and even protected that family against other Blacks.<sup>34</sup> This loyalty and family membership was envisioned as voluntary and ignored the *mammy*’s forced family inclusion and labor. McElya writes:

The faithful slave narrative, however, went one step further to argue that enslaved people appeared faithful and caring not because they *had* to be or were violently compelled to be, but because their fidelity was heartfelt and indicative of their love for and dependence on their owners. At their core, stories of faithful slavery were expressions of the value, honor, and identity of whites.<sup>35</sup>

Whites saw loyalty as a preemptory as Blacks were brought into their family fold and those enslaved family member became a source of pride. After slavery, being able to

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<sup>33</sup> Schirmer, 89.

<sup>34</sup> Jordan-Zachary, 37.

<sup>35</sup> Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: the Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 6.

claim a childhood *mammy* became an identifier of Southern aristocracy.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, pride and love for the *mammy* figure only extended to the White household; her identity outside of the White household was tarnished as her maternal abilities disappeared without a White mistress to oversee the *mammy*.<sup>37</sup> In the Black home the *mammy*'s role was seen as nagging and unmotherly, unlike her loyal, caring nature in the White home. In the Kansas City sheet music collections, the song *Shut Yoah Eyes* depicts a *mammy* figure in an odd lullaby where she more clearly threatens her child to sleep than soothes the child. *Shut Yoah Eyes* is the only portrayal of a *mammy* in the Kansas City collection, while the other portrayals of Black women fall within the *jezebel* stereotype. This is curious since after Reconstruction, almost all Black women in Kansas City who worked were in the White home as servants or laundresses,<sup>38</sup> as even the average White wage owner could afford a laundress.<sup>39</sup> Young Black girls performed child care and served as general housemaids, while married women with children generally chose cooking and washing.<sup>40</sup> This means White men were still continually around Black women with the possibility of liaisons between them. Tate describes the dangers: "domestic service in white households was the least preferred type of female wage labor, not only because of the psychological

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>37</sup> Jordan-Zachary, 39.

<sup>38</sup> Coulter, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997), 52.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 51.

oppression and labor exploitation routinely associated with such work, but also because the worker was frequently in danger of sexual abuse.”<sup>41</sup>

The sexually unattractive *mammy* would seem to be the more desirable sheet music portrayal for White women to purchase, but the *mammy* is noticeable missing. One explanation for the *mammy* absence is sheer reality. Nationally, Black women were careful to separate themselves from the White home to avoid a second slavery. Most Black women refused to live in the White household (though their employers often encouraged them to) in order to avoid long hours and low wages.<sup>42</sup> Married Black women preferred laundry work, even though it was hard labor and they earned little pay, because it allowed the Black mother to attend to her own home.<sup>43</sup> Black women did not loyally serve the White household without question and often demanded fair pay and hours. Although there were no laundress strikes in Kansas City, White’s memory of the 1870s laundress strikes in the South could have shaped a brazen, emboldened view of the Black women who served them.<sup>44</sup> In this case the *mammy* stereotype was no longer one people had regular contact with.

The attraction of playing a character is another possible explanation for the *jezebel*’s prevalence in the collections. Playing a Black woman gave White women permission for sexual expression, which was otherwise unacceptable. For example, in the 1926 *Mournin’*

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<sup>41</sup> Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine’s Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 52.

<sup>42</sup> Edwards, 118.

<sup>43</sup> Hunter, 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

*Fer You* the woman brags of men's interest in her appearance, "Sam Brown sezs lasses you show looks good, Lize you could love me if you only would." This Kansas City song allowed White women to reference their sexual appeal through a Black mask. White women could also criticize men through the nagging aspect of the *jezebel* as in the 1894 Kansas City song *Honey O!* The entire song criticizes "Honey, O" with the chorus, "Get up, you lazy coon, go 'way from me! Rise up, you lazy loon, I hate to see! Honey, you rascal black, you are so slow; Don't you ever come back, Honey, O!" Through song a man could be abused, even if it was a Black man.

The perpetuation of Black women stereotypes partly defined White womanhood. Scholar Julia Jordan-Zachary states that race, gender, and class need binary opposites for definition.<sup>45</sup> White womanhood was in opposition to everything Black; the *jezebel* contrasted and defined White female purity.<sup>46</sup> Beyond sexuality, motherhood defined White women in opposition to the *mammy*. The *jezebel* stereotype denied a stable family home and children, while the *mammy* stereotype depicts Black mothers as non-maternal with *pickaninny* images of Black children as almost animal-like, boasting dirty faces, unkempt hair, and ragged clothing.<sup>47</sup> The *pickanniny* image further defines White children as more loveable and easier to care for in another binary opposition.

*Shut Yoah Eyes* depicts the Black mother as she sings to her child, "Shut yoah eyes now, Can't wait no-how, Mammy's got a heap ob work to do," and "Mammy haint no time

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<sup>45</sup> Jordan-Zachary, 28.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>47</sup> *Ethnic Notions*, DVD, directed by Marion Riggs (San Francisco, CA: Signifyin' Works, 2004).

foah rockin' you!" This song demonstrates the harsh manner towards children as well as the source of the difference. Whereas White women had money to stay at home and care for their children, Black women had to work to keep their children fed and clothed. The amount of work left less time for coddling children and altered the idea of womanhood. For a White woman, "submerging her own identity within those of her husband and her children was the only appropriate way for a woman to realize her social role."<sup>48</sup> Black women did not have that luxury and therefore, according to the White middleclass definition, were not truly women.

While the White view of womanhood esteemed avoiding hard labor the Black idea of womanhood prized doing anything to contribute to the family's welfare and pride in hard labor, especially if the woman could keep up with the men.<sup>49</sup> This attitude was a necessity as no other work was available to Black women. In 1920's Kansas City less than 1.6 percent of employed women were professionals and of that small percentage most were unmarried teachers.<sup>50</sup> The literature of the time reflects the differing attitudes: Black domestic novels promoted love of duty with the heroines continuing their teaching careers as married mothers, while the White domestic novels depicted heroines who have to work out of hardship and are able to stop when they marry well.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Edwards, 130.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>50</sup> Coulter, 79.

<sup>51</sup> Tate, 98.

Economic contributions to the household along with the close proximity of households forcing a lack of privacy inspired a brazen perception of Black women. Black women were forced to air their grievances and problems in the public sphere.<sup>52</sup> As *Honey O!* demonstrates a Black woman was not afraid to call out her man with the lyrics, “Get up, you lazy coon, go way from me! Rise, up you lazy loon, I hate to see! Honey, you rascal black, you are so slow.” The Black woman’s place beside her man in the work force and an open community allowed female criticism. Society accepted criticism of the Black male even from women, but the White male character was not to be besmirched.

The White view also blamed Black women’s industrious labor for inattentive and careless parenting. Black women were considered bad parents because of a perceived poor character evidenced by heavy drinking, fighting, seductress wiles, ignorant housekeeping, and even shabby dressing.<sup>53</sup> Labeling Black women bad mothers led to White interference in Black motherhood. White actions often caused parenting problems, which only furthered the perception that Black mothers were unfit to parent. Under slavery, Black children were considered property of the master and could be taken from their mothers at his whim, making it difficult to maintain a stable parent child relationship. Although written in 1921, *Little Brown Baby Mine* describes the Black mother’s grief in the lyrics, “When you have growed up an’ lef’ de ol’ cabin, I’ll wait to meet you, some day in heben.” Immediately after slavery, unmarried Black women were still denied the right to be mothers: their children were taken from them as soon as they were old enough to work

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>53</sup> Edwards, 135.

as indentured servants in a new twist on slavery.<sup>54</sup> The courts further demonstrate the White opinion of Black motherhood in the case of Camilla Jackson, a Black woman living in Chicago where she was raising a White girl along with her own children. In December 1916, the white child Marjorie Delbridge, who by then had spent fourteen years with Jackson, was removed from the home, and race was the only cited reason.<sup>55</sup> A Black woman could be a *mammy* and care for a White child with a White mistress, but she was not allowed to be a mother.

Character was determined through wealth and race, factors Black women could not hope to alter. Edwards states, “Good character adhered in the possession of wealth and the maintenance of a proper home, not the labor required to produce them.”<sup>56</sup> Character was assumed through race, as the terms “mother” and “lady” were more associated with the White race than behaviors.<sup>57</sup>

A difference in language was also assumed through race. Blacks were characterized in literature and song through dialect, usually to insinuate a lack of education.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>55</sup> McElya, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Edwards, 144.

<sup>57</sup> Jordan-Zachary, 32.

## CHAPTER 5

### DIALECT

It is impossible to consider the portrayal of African Americans in sheet music without considering dialect. Finding dialect in a title in the Kansas City sheet music collections quickly identifies music then perceived as “Black” with titles like *Ah’s Done See’d Er Callicker Mule* and *Mournin’ Fer You*. Beyond identification, dialect shapes Black identity perception, reveals point of view, and defines the character in the song.

Creating a carefully crafted perception of what it meant for a character to be Black was integral to sheet music publishers trying to profit from that perception. Control over the singing character’s speech exerted in the form of dialect allowed composers to use words to re-bondage African Americans for the music-buying public.<sup>1</sup> Referring to minstrelsy, Sam Dennison asserts, “American audiences were unaccustomed to crediting the black with humanity, preferring to see their ‘coloreds’ as dialect-spouting clowns.”<sup>2</sup> Linguistics expert Albert Tricomi further legitimizes Dennison’s statement writing that dialect, “intimates an attitude of condescension or at least superiority.”<sup>3</sup> In his studies of the portrayal of Chinese Americans, Charles Hiroshi Garrett discusses dialect as

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Cohen Minnick, *Dialect and Dichotomy: Literary Representations of African American Speech* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Sam Dennison, *Scandalize my Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Albert H. Tricomi, “Dialect and Identity in Harriet Jacob’s Autobiography and Other Slave Narratives,” *Callalo* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 619.

accentuating difference and confines a race to a stereotype and societal role.<sup>4</sup> Through dialect a sense of the Other is established as well as an attitude of derision.

Why was there such a need for White audiences to portray Blacks as somehow less than human and in a subservient role? Guilt is one major factor. In order to validate the atrocities of slavery and the Jim Crow South that followed, Blacks had to seem less human than Whites. After the Civil War, even the North was wary of defending the less-than-human perception of Blacks, as Restoration meant acquiescence to the Southern mentality in an effort to mend national relations. American nationalism offered difference as a definition, with dialect at the forefront of separation. As Anderson defines language's role in nation formation, "from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be 'invited into' the imagined community."<sup>5</sup> Designating a Black speech, White America refused to "invite" Blacks into their community through language.

So far this discussion implies that only White composers used dialect; however, Black authors and composers did use dialect, but the literary trend did not take hold among the majority of these writers until the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Dialect implied a class level and plantation associations most Black authors wanted to avoid. For example, slave narratives from the 1850s and 1860s (some of the first examples of African-American authorship) use standard English with no dialect;<sup>7</sup> these authors wished to separate themselves from

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Hiroshi Garrett, "Chinatown, Whose Chinatown? Defining America's Borders with Musical Orientalism," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 135.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 145.

<sup>6</sup> Minnick, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Tricomi, 621.

the White perception of a slave; however, over time some Black authors adopted dialect as part of the Black identity. The Black writer James Weldon Johnson even marks the removal of dialect in non-coon song rags, as White men stealing the ragtime genre and separating it from its origins.<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult to find background information on the composers of the sheet music published in Kansas City, let alone determine the composer's race; however, one piece depicting African Americans definitively identifies a Black composer. Local composer Blind Boone, famous for his ragtime contributions, composed the song *Dat Mornin' in De Sky* (1899). Dialect is evident from the title and is prevalent throughout the piece. There are several reasons a Black composer might institute dialect, despite negative connotations. Financial gain offers a possible explanation. Bowing to White public perception in order to ensure sales tempted many Black composers; one example is Black composer Ernest Hogan's composition *All Coons Look Alike to Me*.<sup>9</sup> The Otherness and native exotic of dialect is emphasized by Hogan to give the White consumers the perception they wanted. Sometimes the lyrics had a double meaning communicating an inside joke to the Black audience. For example chickens could represent ogling or even White harassment of young Black women.<sup>10</sup>

Another possibility for a Black composer to employ dialect involves a complicated perception that calls for the Black community to adopt the White perception of the Black

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<sup>8</sup> Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 56.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas L. Riis, *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890-1915* (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1989), 52.

persona. This demonstrates the White population's leadership expertise, "convincing people, through imagery and discourse, of the leadership's legitimate right to lead."<sup>11</sup> The dialectical caricature becomes the Black perception. Boone's rebellious lyrics "Not only black man steal but white man too" cast doubt on both possible explanations. More likely, Boone is attempting to capture the folk spirit of the tunes he encountered in his travels through the Midwest and accurately depict his everyday speech.<sup>12</sup> Boone also composes in the third person to differentiate himself from the majority of White composers. According to Dennison, third-person perspective denotes a Black composer, as opposed to the White composer preferred first-person.<sup>13</sup> Garrett confirms the White preference for first-person writing, "Ethnic novelty songs of the time often switched in the chorus to 'dialect' written in the first person, allowing the singer to occupy and caricature an ethnic role."<sup>14</sup> While Boone colors his composition with dialect, his folk music background and third-person point of view separate his dialect from White intentions.

Boone uses dialect for folk evocations and realism, so can dialect have an artistic function? Minnick writes dialect must be considered through context.<sup>15</sup> Boone's religious context in *Dat Mornin' in De Sky* lends dialect viability, singing in the language of Black rural congregations, but what of the other songs in the collection? The other songs are

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 194.

<sup>12</sup> William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedel, *The Art of Ragtime* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 30.

<sup>13</sup> Dennison, 90.

<sup>14</sup> Garrett, 130.

<sup>15</sup> Minnick, 32.

written in first-person in a mocking portrayal with likely White authorship, or Black composers profiting from stereotypes. Many of the songs employ the terms “coon” or “nigger,” which were the most offensive ethnic identifiers.<sup>16</sup> Tricomi lists spelling alteration with no phonetic change as the most condescending and demeaning use of dialect.<sup>17</sup> The majority of the dialectical indications are removing the “g” from “ing” words; removing the beginning vowel from words like “around” or “about;” and replacing “th” with “d,” resulting in “dat” or “de.” However, songs like *Shut Yoah Eyes* replace “opossum” with “possum” and “ef for “if.” This change only serves to portray the singing mother as uneducated. *Ah’s Done See’d Er Callicker Mule* replaces “was” with “wuz” and “ez” for “is” and *Hay Beans and Rags* substitutes “tho” for “though.” These dialect changes are only evident to the performer and shape his or her perception of the subject being portrayed. One wonders why the composers felt the need to make non-phonetic changes for a phonetic performance. The argument could be made that the use of dialect establishes a Black identity, but there are at least two problems with that argument. One, an air of superiority, not realism pervades, and two, dialect is used to establish identity of other minorities considered inferior.

Authors and composers use dialect as a characteristic of any economically disadvantaged community.<sup>18</sup> For example, Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* belongs to the Cockney community of London as long as she has the poor dialect. As soon as Eliza

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<sup>16</sup>Riis, 53.

<sup>17</sup> Tricomi, 622.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence Starr, “Toward a Reevaluation of Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*,” *American Music* 2, no.2 (Summer 1984): 27.

speaks without a dialect she no longer feels part of that community. Sheet music published in Kansas City portrays the Irish community through dialect as well. In the song *Beautiful Dark Girl* “o” is used for “of” and “ma” for “my.” This is not surprising, since Kansas City had a tradition of grouping the Irish and Black communities together. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s Irish and Blacks lived and worked together in the West Bottoms, where society relegated them. There is even a large history of inter-marriage.<sup>19</sup>

Language solidifies community, as Anderson asserts “Through that language, encountered at mother’s knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.”<sup>20</sup> Through language Whites solidified their own identity and an imagined Black identity. Dialect was a demarcation of Other, a way for Whites to separate, mock, and feel superior to another community, while strengthening the White community through opposition.

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<sup>19</sup> Charles E. Coulter, *Take Up the Black Man’s Burden* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 25.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, 154.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS

Some coon sub-genres in the pieces include “shouts:” religious songs in dance form.<sup>1</sup> That label is attached to the deacon series, which are religious only in that they are about clergy members and have a church setting. In coon songs, the preacher or deacon “developed into a durable type related to the types associated with the pseudo-spiritual. The authority figure, represented by the ‘preacher’ or ‘deacon,’ was a total corruption of black religious manifestations; this figure propounded a phony morality while actively engaged in chicken-stealing, womanizing, drinking, or almost anything considered illegal or sinful during this period.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **Deacon Series**

The three piece Kansas City advertised “Deacon Series” boasts the same composer and publisher William E. Skidmore,<sup>3</sup> but oddly Marshall Walker is only the lyricist for *It Takes a Long Tall Brown-Skin Gal* (1912) and *Somebody Done Me Wrong* (1918). Renton Tunnah is the lyricist for *Pray for the Lights to Go Out* (1916). Walker and Tunnah differ most obviously in treatment of sexual content. Walker only hints at scandal in *It Takes a Long Tall Brown-Skin Gal* with the lyrics, “Somebody started scandalation ‘round. Next Sunday morn they found the church door lock’d.” Walker is also subtle in *Somebody’s*

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<sup>1</sup> Jack A. Batterson, *Blind Boone: Missouri’s Ragtime Pioneer* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Sam Dennison, *Scandalize my Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 383.

<sup>3</sup> Skidmore composed more sheet music with Black subjects, including *Thim Doggon’d Trifflin’ Blues* that are not found in the Kansas City collection.

*Done Me Wrong* letting the listener know in the chorus that the other deacons have been “messin’” around the offended deacon’s home. Alternately, Tunnah’s *Pray for the Light to Go Out* flaunts sexuality in lines such as, “All that he could hear down there in the dark, Was baby, Honey, turtle dove,” and “if you want to spread joy, Just pray for the lights to go out.” Walker uses the word “joy” in *It Takes a Long Tall Brown-Skin Gal*, but shares an inside double-meaning with the performer. The line is written, “For twenty years Ise pass’d ‘Joy’ by.” The listener only hears the happiness connotation, while the performer sees a hint at the woman’s name.

The “Deacon Series” has one common theme: Black women as the temptresses and downfalls of the pillars of the Black community. Clergy positions were one of the few leadership roles available to Black males in the early 1910s when these songs were written and any position of power in the Black community was viewed as a threat to the majority of the White community.<sup>4</sup> These songs depict church leaders as easily misled, comic men with lines such as, “I always thought that preachin’ was my line, but since I met this gal I chang’d my min’” in *It Takes a Long Tall Brown-Skin Gal*. The deacons are also depicted as violent towards other Black men and women. In *Somebody’s Done Me Wrong*, Walker implies the deacon killed another man in the lines, “My bosom friend, old deacon Jones, had my wife hypnotized; He started this here row, His wife’s a widow now.” Later in the same song he extends the violence to all the other deacons with the line, “I’ll bet I’ll break them Ten Commandments on some Deacon’s jaw.” Abuse to women occurs in *Pray for*

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<sup>4</sup> Charles E. Coulter, *Take Up the Black Man’s Burden* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 87.

*the Lights to Go Out* in Skidmore's line, "Father grabs a sister 'round the neck."

Perpetuating a stereotype of Blacks as violent, Walker and Tunnah depict Blacks as primitive and therefore less human than civilized Whites. Temptress women and the men who easily succumb to their whiles present another aspect of primitivism. The "Joy" of *It Takes a Long Tall Brown-Skin Gal* leads the deacon to leave his post, and the listener knows the deacon of *Pray for the Lights to Go Out* has succumbed to temptation in the line, "He feels himself a slippin' grabs the first gal near." In *Somebody's Done Me Wrong* the deacon has at least thought about being unfaithful with the line, "I always tried to let the other Deacon's wives alone."

As part of the primitivist aspect of these songs, the Black temptresses represent a native exotic for the middleclass White consumer. Exotic women are often depicted as extremely beautiful with a hint of danger, almost sirens luring men to their deaths. Black women are depicted in the Deacon Series as extremely desirable, but ruinous and often brazen, following the *jezebel* stereotype. The woman of *Pray for the Light to Go Out*, whose neck was grabbed, "hollers" for the deacon to "pray for the lights to go out" along with sweetly singing it in his ear. She also exhibits the inappropriate church dance moves with the lines, "Throw'd up both hands and got way back, Took two steps forw'd and ball'd the Jack." This portrayal would have been especially insulting to the Black community at the time as club goers and church goers were diametrically opposed.<sup>5</sup>

*Somebody's Done Me Wrong* and *It Takes a Long Tall Brownskin Gal* portray Black women in a more flattering light. The women are still temptresses, but the deacon is

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<sup>5</sup> Coulter, 218.

the one ultimately blamed for the fall from grace. The focus is also demonstrated in the climaxes of each piece. The tempted preacher is the focus of *Pray for the Lights to Go Out* with the highest and longest stressed words in the chorus: “Brother” and “Deacon.” As the title implies, *It Takes a Long Tall Brownskin Gal* focuses on the temptress and the titular line is sung on C<sup>2</sup>. *Somebody’s Done Me Wrong* also focuses on the title, but is more concerned with the wrongful acts than a single character. There is a *ritardando* and *fermata* in the chorus, which are different for each verse. The singer’s violence and indignation are revealed in all three instances with the lyrics, “I’m done,” “Deacon’s jaw” (a reference to breaking it), and “messin’ ‘round my home,” calling out the wrongdoer. In every case the focus is separating the characters from their White audience and creating an Other.

Skidmore’s compositions also play on the native exotic. In *Pray for the Lights to Go Out*, Skidmore references the native exotic of Black churches with a call-and-response echo at the end of each line of the verse. Rhythmically, the primarily straight left hand line juxtaposed with the syncopated right hand line define the pieces as novelty rags. Ragtime songs were associated with a sexual freedom, real or imagined, not available to middleclass White consumers. The dialect Walker and Tunnah incorporate, helps establish the native exotic through slight alterations such as “preaching” changed to “preachin’” and “‘round” instead of “around.” Bad grammar also emphasizes otherness; for example, “ain’t” or “somebody got up turn’d the lights all out.”

The reference or perhaps the extremity of the violence, sex, and infidelity portrayed equaled success for *Pray for the Lights to Go Out*. *Pray for the Lights to Go Out* and

*Somebody's Done Me Wrong* were performed by famous black coon entertainer Bert Williams, as perhaps was *It Takes a Long Tall Brownskin Gal* since deacon songs were a regular feature in Williams act.<sup>6</sup>

### **Lullabies**

Lullabies are another sub-genre in the collection. The lullabies contained in the collection are vastly different in style and content. *Little Brown Baby Mine* has all the elements normally associated with the genre with soft, slow musical lines and soothing lyrics, while *Shut Yoah Eyes* is only a lullaby because the lyrics discuss a child going to sleep. Black mothers are the intended singers of both songs, but the mothers are polar opposites.

Carson J. Robinson wrote *Little Brown Baby Mine*, the later of the two works, in 1921. Robinson was also the publisher of the piece indicating this piece as a vanity work that was not popular enough for a bigger publisher to want it. The piece is in a triple meter with a waltz-like tempo with *piano* dynamic markings and no note faster than a quarter-note. Instead of the verse-refrain structure of much of the collection the piece is in strophic form with two verses. The high point of each verse is an ascending line leading to a held F, emphasizing some of the sweet sentiments of the piece. In the first verse, the lyrics are “Mammy will hold you” and in the second verse “Good angels keep you.” There is a short interlude between the verses, restating the introduction. The soft, soothing setting portrays the Black woman as a caring, gentle mother who is not that different from her White counterpart. Lullabies of the time depicted all motherhood as sacrosanct and

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<sup>6</sup> Dennison, 386.

“tended toward excessive sentimentality while retaining the attitude that blacks as a whole were inferior.”<sup>7</sup>

*Shut Yoah Eyes* was written in 1897 with words by Dreamor R. Drake and music by H.O. Wheeler. The piece was published by C.O. Brokaw, an outside publisher unlike *Little Brown Baby Mine*. The setting is jazzy, reminding the listener more of a tavern tune than a folk song oriented lullaby. The melodic line is full of dotted-eighth-sixteenth-note figures along with triplets keeping the piece in the ragtime vein. The dynamics also stray from the typical lullaby with a *forte* introduction and a short *piano* section before returning to *forte* by the fifth line where the dynamics stay for the rest of the piece. The piece is organized into verse and more important refrain structure. The high point of the refrain is marked with a *fermata*, *fortissimo* dynamic marking and *ritardando* on the lyrics, “Big Moon sees dat you aint a sleepin’ any, Brier Fox’ll be heah purty soon.” The loud dynamics and syncopated rhythms match the harsh lyrics.

The lyrics of *Little Brown Baby Mine* are basic responses of motherhood. The mother refers to her baby as “Little brown baby ob mine,” claiming ownership of the child and sentiment. Pride in ownership of a child could be a strike against the piece since White audiences still liked to consider women and children property. The inability of the mother to maintain her household and keep her child are expressed in the second verse: “When you have growed up an’ lef’ de ol’ cabin, I’ll wait to meet you, some day in heben, An’ when dey lay me away, Up in de sky I will pray, Good angels keep you and bring you to mammy.” The mother further extols her baby, calling him or her “sweet as a rose on de

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<sup>7</sup> Dennison, 418.

vine.” The sentiment again is similar to a White mother’s, closing the distance between the two races. Despite the religious reference to angels, superstition is still associated with the mother as she sings, “Mamy will hold you and keep ‘way de goblins.” Superstition is only hinted at in this song, while it is the featured element of *Shut Yoah Eyes*.

The mother of *Shut Yoah Eyes* first threatens her child with a superstitious figure in the first verse with the lyrics, “Big Moon shines bright, Watch you all night. Brier Fox can’t get you ef he tries, Won’t be tryin’ ‘Less youse cryin.’ Bettah be a shuttin’ ob yoah eyes.” The chorus focuses even further on Brier Fox:

Old Brier Fox comes a creepin’ down de chimney  
Catchin’ little niggers when dey cries,  
Big Moon helps him to find a pickaninny,  
Yo bettah be a shuttin’ ob yoah eyes.  
Just yo shut yoah eyes, you yaller pickanniny.  
Shut yoah eyes you little yaller coon,  
Big Moon sees dat you aint a sleepin’ any,  
Brier Fox’ll be heah purty soon.

A nonchalant whistled melody follows the loud, syncopated chorus in direct disparity to the frightening lyrics. The lyrics are more the things of nightmares than soothing bedtime fare, depicting the mother as unfit and the opposite of ideal motherhood. Although the word *mammy* is used in *Little Brown Baby* as well, the *mammy* stereotype is exemplified in *Shut Yoah Eyes*. Without a White overseer the Black mother cannot properly care for her children. The cause of the mother’s hastiness is identified as “a heap ob work to do. ‘Possum’s burnin’ Cakes want turnin,’ Mammy haint no time foah rockin’ you!” Later the mother sadly tells the child, “Little Pickaninny’s got to rock hisself.” Instead of creating empathy for the overworked mother the song assumes her family’s poor state is an unalterable side-effect of her race. Because the Black woman lacks wealth, she is looked

down on, not pitied. Part of being poor meant eating available meat such as opossums (like the mother is cooking in the song), another stereotype that condemned Blacks when they provided for their families in any way possible.

*Shut Yoah Eyes* also depicts the *pickaninny* child, a figure unworthy of sympathy. The *pickaninny* inspires love from at least his mother,<sup>8</sup> but this time even she shows him little love or care. Perhaps this is because the stereotype held that despite loving their children Black women secretly wished the children were White in an assumed self-hatred.<sup>9</sup>

Dialect betrays the attitude of the lyricist and intended audience. In *Little Brown Baby Mine* “th” is changed to “d” for “de” and “dat” and “of” is changed to “ob.” The “g” is often left off the end of words such as “comin” and “hummin.” The changes evoke dialect only and all spellings alter the phonetics of the word. On the other hand, *Shut Yoah Eyes* spelling uses “git” instead of “get” and “ef” instead of “if,” purely to demonstrate a lack of education. The grammar and the words “youse,” “haint,” and “purty” further mock the singer. The most telling language manifests in the word “mammy” in both lullabies and the absence of the word “mother” or “mom.” A word separates both Black women as an Other and labels them as incapable of motherhood.

### **Jezebel pieces**

Often the *jezebel* has been portrayed through the man’s perception of their relationship (as in the Bully songs), but in the next three pieces the woman is either the direct object of the song in *She’s a Mean Job* (1921), or the singer in *Mournin’ Fer You*

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<sup>8</sup> Dennison, 416.

<sup>9</sup> Dennison, 419.

(1926) and *Honey O!* (1894). Each song depicts different *jezebel* characteristics, but all of three depict Black women as fickle, promiscuous, and morally questionable.

*She's a Mean Job* embodies complete immorality and all the vice associated with Pendergast-run Kansas City. Her sexuality is first referenced with the lyrics "Folks turn 'round to stare at her, She's a Mean job. Traffic halts while motors whirr, She's a Mean job. With one look into her eyes Men go home and beat their wives." This reference to domestic abuse is primarily aimed at the Black population where abuse cases were made more public, but the White population is not excluded. It is possible to imagine a White man singing this song and finding that line humorous. The entire portrayal is racially vague with only dialect hinting at a Black subject. Throughout the 1930s, depictions of the *jezebel* became less racially specific, indicating a lowered esteem for White women and no improvement for the image of Black women.<sup>10</sup> The second verse further emphasizes her sexuality and her immodest dress with the lyrics, "Always flirting frightful, Voguey dresses." It is revealed she dresses for the men, not caring much what the women think in the lyrics, "But the boys say she's a pip." She is separated as an Other, while she separates herself from her gender. Her smoking, drinking, and betting habits further establish her nature as unnaturally masculine. In the first chorus her smoking and drinking are apparent in the lyrics, "Never smokes, but rolls her own, She's a Mean job And though I never heard that she was ill, Still Doctors send prescriptions for Ginger ale afflictions." She is associated with betting in the second chorus, "And though I never heard that she would bet, Yet Once she stopped the races the horses hid their faces." Her masculine tendencies

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<sup>10</sup> Dennison, 444.

are hinted at instead of clearly stated, just like the gossip and exotic mystery that surrounds the character. Her siren-like danger, identified as “lots of trouble” in the first verse, manifests through deceit and her sexual powers. “When she trips her dainty feet, Men fall prostrate on the street,” demonstrates her power over men. And her dangerous, deceitful nature is emphasized in both choruses with the lyrics, “she fools them and cools them, telling pretty lies,” and “practicing deceit.” Perhaps this song gave White women the opportunity to adopt a character normally prohibited, or allowed White men to pursue an exotic fantasy.

The strophic, two-verse song is set to heavy syncopation with phrases almost always entering on the second beat. Grace-notes and shakes abound in the accompaniment, emphasizing the rag style. The prevalent *marcato* quarter notes and syncopated eighth-notes highlight the whole-notes on the words “mean job.” The dialect is minimal with the replacement of “round” for “around” and “em” for “them.” There is also an inclusion of slang, such as “vampy,” “pip,” and “voguey.”<sup>11</sup>

*Mournin’ Fer You* is from the point of view of a woman who recently lost her man. There is no reference to the man being her husband, as the socially accepted normal relationship status is denied this unstable woman. The audience also never learns how the man died, but his death is made clear in the first verse’s lyrics, “honey you’s done dead as you’s ever gwine to be, Nothin’ but your ghost ken eber come back to me.” After her man’s death, the main emphasis of the song is the woman’s fickleness and promiscuity.

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<sup>11</sup> This is the only piece in the collection by lyricist George Landis and music by Jimmy Selby.

From the first line it is clear her mourning originates from a need for another man, “Baby ah’s still weepin’ an’ moanin’ fer you, ‘Cause I tried dat udder nigger an’ he won’t do.” The woman indicates she would be happy as long as she could find a replacement man. Her inconstancy is revealed further in the chorus with the lyric, “All dis week been wearin’ black.” The audience now knows the man has only been dead a week and attempts are already being made to forget him and move on. In the course of the three verses three new possible suitors are mentioned, “Sam Brown,” “Jim Jones” and “Rastus Smith.” All three are turned down because of lack of wealth, money being the dead man’s most extolled virtue in the second verse lyric, “Bout dat insurance money you left fer me, Oh man my swell morning outfit you should see.” Appearing five years after *She’s a Mean Job*, now the woman is portrayed as a good-dresser, at least in her own opinion. Her three new suitors lack income to keep her in fine clothes. Jim Jones asks her for money in the third verse, “You should heah Jim Jones tale of woe, How he’s down an’ out, won’t ah loan him a dollar or so.” Rastus Smith is turned down in the same verse with the lyrics, “Rastus Smith sezs sugar don’t cher love me good, Ah sezs nigger if you had insurance maybe ah could.” In the end this *jezebel* character reveals a love of money over love of a man, although at the end of the chorus she says she is “lookin’ an’ longin’ fer some coon just as true.”

The three suitors’ portrayals are worth examining as well. All three are chasing a woman who lost her man a week ago, and all three lack financial resources. Sam Brown is portrayed as brazen and hyper-sexualized in the lyrics, “Sam Brown sezs lasses you show looks good, Lize you could love me if you only would.” Jim Jones shows a different

brazen character asking this vulnerable woman for money and Rastus Smith just lacks resources. The Black man is portrayed as incapable of supporting a woman, but that does not stop him from trying to be with her.

Mobre Earle sets his lyrics softly with a *piano* dynamic marking and occasional syncopation to keep within the coon song genre. The setting also text paints as “weepin’” and “moanin’” scoop downward in a melismatic, sob-like motion. “Lookin’” and “longin’” at the end of the chorus also have melismatic settings emphasizing the “long” mourning period she is enduring. The bluesy nature of the lyrics is stressed through a flat third (blue note) on the words “an’ moanin’” and “an’ cryin’” in the chorus. The accompaniment is simple with quarter-note chords in the left hand and voice doubling in the right hand, all in keeping with the somewhat somber nature of the song.

Dialect pervades the piece with cases of non-phonetic changes such as “sez” for “says” and “ken” for “can.” Some words are not obvious such as “cher” in the lyrics, “sugar don’t cher love me good.” In this context “cher” is used for “you.” The final “g” is left off of most “ing” words and “going” is changed to “gwine” throughout. The heavy use of dialect portrays an uneducated woman, also emphasized through her waste of insurance money on one outfit.

*Honey O!* is the earliest of the *jezebel* pieces and was copyrighted in 1894. *Honey O!* must have been popular first garnering a publication in 1894 by T.B. Harms in New York and earning publication again in 1901 as a supplement in the *Kansas City Times*. The *Honey O! jezebel* demonstrates a nagging character, constantly criticizing her man. In her tirade more about “Honey O” is revealed than information about the *jezebel* singer.

The tempting seductress, fickle and immoral, is missing in this early portrayal, perhaps because the Kansas City segregated housing and Pendergast-controlled Black East-side were yet to be established.

“Honey O” describes the Sambo caricature physically and behaviorally from the first verse. The exaggerated, grotesque caricature is physically described, “His feet are very large and just the same his mouth.” The character’s lazy nature (only interested in singing and dancing) is evident in the lines that immediately follow, “He’s just a trifle crazy, And oh! He is so lazy; But at motion he’s a ‘daisy.’” Honey O is a good dancer, but not a hard worker. His musical ability is displayed in the lyrics, “he whistles ‘Bonnie Lassie,’ followed with a whistled rendition of the chorus. Honey O originates from the South, the by now imagined haven, as revealed in the lyrics, “There’s the coon from Alabama, way down South.” He is portrayed as lost outside the Southern slavery system. In the chorus, the *jezebel* demonstrates her aggressive, nagging nature telling her man, “Get up, you lazy coon, go ‘way from me! Rise up, you lazy loon, I hate to see! Honey, you rascal black, you are so slow; Don’t you ever come back Honey O!” Instead of lovingly supporting her man she is casting him aside.

Honey O is not the only man portrayed in the song. The third verse discusses “ole Uncle Rasmus,” the old man minstrel caricature, also portraying a Black man lost outside the realms of slavery. His poverty is mocked instead of pitied as Uncle Rasmus “is so fond of pickin’ A turkey or a chicken, He would take it for a lickin.” The older man is so poor he has to steal turkeys and chickens to survive despite the risk of being beaten. The

unsympathetic woman condemns and sends the old uncle away with the same chorus reserved for Honey O.

Musically, *Honey O!* begins with dotted eighth-sixteenth notes in the right hand and straight quarter notes in the left hand for the introduction. *Marcato* quarter notes lead into the verses, which are sparsely accompanied. The average piano student could play the easy quarter-note chords often alternating between the two hands. The syncopation is left to the singer with only occasional doubling in the piano part. The chorus foregoes syncopation, simplifying the rhythm to depict straightforward, angry speech, as the playful verse lyrics are replaced with an ultimatum. The unchanging *forte* dynamic marking further emphasizes her emotions as well as the song's rowdy nature. The lyrics "Honey O!" are emphasized through a long note on "O!" as the singer expresses her exasperation. Three different *jezebels* are portrayed in the songs with three different possible political and societal purposes.

### **Bully Songs**

The bully was another popular coon song character embodying a jealous male, who women cannot outsmart and cave to his demands.<sup>12</sup> The songwriting duo Albert H. Brown and Chas. N. Daniels wrote two such songs depicting a jealous Black male singing about his fickle woman: *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* (1901) and *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights* (1898). The duo is also credited with *You Tell Me Your Dream* and *My Sugar Baby*, which are not within the archives. Despite the same authorship, similar subjects and close chronology, *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* was published

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<sup>12</sup> Dennison, 373.

by Daniels and Russell and *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights* by the more well-known Carl Hoffman. Charles Daniels worked in publishing for Carl Hoffman, but left in 1901 to start his own publishing company possibly due to an incident involving Scott Joplin. Daniels listed himself as an arranger on Joplin's Original Rags while working for Hoffman, and Joplin never published with Hoffman again.<sup>13</sup>

Musically, both pieces demonstrate ragtime syncopation with straight quarter notes pitted against off-beat eighth-notes and dotted-eighth-sixteenth note figures in the melody. Both contain a short introduction, but *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* foregoes a homophonic texture for a four-measure unison statement emphasized through a *fortissimo* dynamic and heavy syncopation. Two *piano* measures of a repeated vamp follow the introduction, demonstrating the possible theatrics of the piece. *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights* also demonstrates dramatization with a held *fermata* on the first word of every verse.

Dialect is less emphasized in *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* than in *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights* and inconsistent. For example, the first verse uses the word "you" in, "Baby don't you know you made a big mistake," but the second verse changes the "you" to "yo," in "Who's a gwine to help yo' hang yo' washing' out." Both songs add "a" where it serves no function as in the line "you don't need a no kitchen stove" in *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* and "It's a all about ma baby Lou" in *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights*. *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights* mocks the singer's intelligence through the use

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<sup>13</sup> Peter A Munstedt, "Kansas City Music Publishing: The First Fifty Years," *American Music* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 364.

of the nonsense words “dooty doo” in the chorus with the words set aside in quotes. The minstrel characteristics of the Zip coon resonate in the word, “eradicators;” a big word in the midst of “an’” for “and” and “ma” for “my.”

In both songs the *jezebel*, demonstrating her fickle and promiscuous characteristics, cheats on her guy. In *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights*, the singer’s suspicions of “baby Lou’s” infidelity are confirmed in the second verse lyrics, “At just about ten minutes to eight, a swell niggah barber walked up to de gate, An’ he knocked, yes he knocked on ma baby’s door. He went inside, turned de glim down low, an’ he an’ ma a baby sat a down on de flo’, And on her hand he put a diamond ring.” The man has all the nights of the week with “Lou” except Sunday, which he must fight to get back while the man in *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* has already lost his woman. We know his love is gone from the first lyrics, “Baby don’t you know you made a big mistake, When you turned me loose, I used to be a picture card in your deck, Now I am a deuce.” Her presumed infidelity is contained in the second verse lyrics, “I won’t let no other nigger set, In de same chair I set in.” This does not stop him appealing for her to come back in the second verse: “Now baby don’t yo’ think the proper thing to do, Just to break the ice; Would be for you to press yo’ ruby lips to mine, an’ kiss ‘em once or twice, And tell me that your heart for me is true, A thumpin’ an’ a jumpin’ like it used to do, An’ you’ll not regret, That I’m livin’ here yet, I will be so good to you.”

Both men turn to savage behavior in response to their women’s inconstancy. The man of *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* threatens to leave his woman in the cold without even the clothes on her back in the first verse: “Why gal the very clothes a hangin’

on yo' back, they all belongs to me, And what yo' gwine to do, when they am gone." His lack of support is the subject of the chorus: "You don't need a no sealskin sack, In de summer time, An' you don't need a no kitchen stove, Nor nuthin' else of mine. But tell me what you are a gwine to do, when it begins to snow, An' when de cold, cold wind begins to blow." The man in *I Wants Ma Sunday Night* took a more violent approach towards Lou's would-be suitor in the second verse when he "jumped through de window into ma home, carved dat niggah to de bone." The chorus declares his justification for his violent act: "Oh, oh, ma baby, I love you true, but to me you done de 'dooty doo' I wants yes I wants ma Sunday nights." He then brags of his violence in the third verse: "Says I to ma baby, I'se ma nat'al born self, since I laid dat a niggah on de shelf: Guess I didn't put de rollers under him. When I gets mad it aint no fun, Ise a thousan' times worse dan a gatlin' gun, An' even, a white man's chance is slim." The reference to his violence as a match for White aggression is surprising, but the portrayal creates fear of Black men which White society fostered. The portrayal also emphasizes a more primal character, brute strength to solve problems as opposed to presumed White, superior intelligence. Lou rewards her man's violent streak in the lyrics, "But now ma 'babe,' says I'm her steady, dat I can come an' go, when a I gets ready, And she will cause me no more trouble or fights." The man's boast and Lou's reward imply violence is condoned in Black society, a dangerous belief resulting in a lack of White police intervention in Black on Black violence in Kansas City.

Marriage is noticeably missing from both songs. Although *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow* is about the dissolution of material assets, no legal contract is

referenced. In *I Wants Ma Sunday Nights*, the Sunday night suitor offers a diamond ring, but he is not the ultimate winner of Lou's affections. The Black community is portrayed as incapable of maintaining the White standard of love and is therefore denied the portrayal of marriage. Black's fickle, primal nature is blamed for the failed relationships not the lack of a recognized societal bond. The free relationship portrayal may also betray a White jealousy and escape from the societal responsibilities and expectations of a married, White, middleclass couple.

The musical emphasis of both pieces is the title words in the chorus. "When de cold, cold wind begins to blow" is set apart with straight, ascending quarter notes and a whole note tied to a quarter note on the word "blow." The man's own coldness and cruelty to his lover are the emphasis of the piece. "I wants ma Sunday nights" is also emphasized through straight quarter notes, but these are accented and have a *forte* dynamic marking. This is against a dotted-eighth note accompaniment. The man's selfish wants are the focus of the song, portraying his nonchalance over his violent behavior and the needs of Lou. The musical emphasis of both songs is a Black man's selfish, brutal nature.

### **Jonah Songs**

Bert Williams composed several songs depicting a suffering "Jonah" man with "unremitting bad luck."<sup>14</sup> The next three songs depict the "Jonah" character as irresponsible, depending on fortune to determine his fate instead of hard work. This would assuage the guilt of White society for the poor economic circumstances the Black population of Kansas City suffered. Instead of examining the effects of White oppression

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas L. Riis, *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York 1890-1915* (Washington D. C: Smithsonian Institution, 1989), 50.

and limited professional opportunities available to Blacks, the White population preferred to blame Black poverty on financial promiscuity and fate. This furthered the notion that Whites were superior as fortune seemed to favor them, and ignored the racist causes behind the economic disparity. Three songs in the collections from the mid-1920s portray Black men as dependent on fortune and superstition instead of their own hard work and means. The oldest is *Ah's Done See'd Er Callicker Mule* (1923) with lyrics by John Proctor Mills and music by E. Edwin Crierie, followed by *Hay, Beans and Rags* (1925)<sup>15</sup> by Ned Underhill, and *Who Hoodooed Me?* (1926) by K. R. Barnum. All three promote the stereotype that Black men can only get money through gambling or cheating and the “white dogma held that only fortuitous circumstance could bring wealth to the shiftless, ignorant black.”<sup>16</sup> *Who Hoodooed Me?* furthers the stereotype to encompass fortune explaining and exempting the singer's poor choices.

Although the three song subjects are similar, the dialect and cases of fortune vary in extremes. The song *Who Hoodooed Me?* demeans without the use of dialect. The only altered words in the piece are “trav’l” and “thru.”<sup>17</sup> The grammar still indicates class distinction with lines such as, “when her horns get sprouted.” The real linguistic insult is delivered in the title. The word “hoodoo” represents a real religion, but is reduced to nonsense or silly slang. “Hoodoo” represents the Afro-American counterpart of West Indian voodoo, which replaces Christian guilt with an acceptance of life and ceremonies

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<sup>15</sup> This song also has a lyrical insert for *Hair, Bones and Rags* by the same composer.

<sup>16</sup> Dennison, 358.

<sup>17</sup> “Thru” is a changed spelling not a phonetic change, but only appears once.

often involving trances.<sup>18</sup> The Black man's religion is not taken seriously, as hoodoo imagery comingles with the Christian images of angels and devils. The Black singer portrays the religion as a superstitious curse imposed on him in the lines, "Now something's got me hoodooed, I believe it's come to stay and it's never going to leave me, not before the judgement day." Superstition is associated with uneducated or comic figures who do not have the sense afforded educated, reasonable people (in this case White people). The singer exploits a superstitious nature to evade responsibility for his choices.

The source of the Black man's frustration is revealed in the second verse of *Who Hoodooed Me?*:

The day that I got married,  
Thru the process of the law,  
They surely got the papers mixed,  
The worst I ever saw.  
They gave me a dog's license,  
Put the collar on to stay,  
I know because I've always lived,  
A dog's life since that day.

All the man's suffering derives from his marriage to a Black woman. Like the women examined in the Deacon series, his wife was desirous at first, a fact revealed in the line, "That little angel to the altar I led." The Black woman's nature quickly changes, depicting Black women as inconstant in the lines:

But when her wings get sprouted they were horns instead.  
She got my goat, She sunk my boat.  
She buzzed around me just like a bee,  
That wasn't all that she did to me.

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<sup>18</sup> Ortiz Walton, *Music: Black, White and Blue: A Sociological Survey of the Use and Misuse of Afro-American Music* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972), 24.

The Black woman is depicted as cruel, the devil herself with sharp horns. The woman is vicious while her husband blames the consequences of his choices on a supernatural curse.

The musical genre is closest to a rag with a boom-chick bass line, but with almost no syncopation. Most likely composer Ken Raymond Barnum was emphasizing the depressed mood of the subject, which dance-associated syncopation would diminish. Downward melodic motion, chromatic motion, and the moderate tempo further the established mood. The dramatic climax of the song is left for the end on three half-note Bs followed by a higher D half-note. “Who?” is the text for all of these half-notes and has the effect of an owl cry. The depiction of the Black man is dehumanizing as Barnum attempts humor through animal imitation.

*Ah’s Done See’d Er Callicker Mule* also references superstition and is even called a “Negro Superstition” on the cover. The superstition involves passing a calico mule’s path, presumably a variation on the documented superstition granting a wish to one who sees a gray mule and does not look back after passing the mule.<sup>19</sup> Seeing a calico mule is extremely rare as most mules are solid gray, white, brown, black or a light reddish-brown.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the sighting itself is mocking the singer, who more likely saw a calico horse. The mule subject is common to the coon song, minstrel show genre, which the popularity of the song *The Kickin’ Mule* in minstrel shows throughout the United States

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<sup>19</sup> Sigmund A Lavine and Vincent Scuro, *Wonders of Mules* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1982), 13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

demonstrates.<sup>21</sup> *The Kickin' Mule* involves no superstition, but a mule outsmarting a man and inflicting bodily harm.

*Ah's Done See'd a Calicker Mule's* dialect is so thick it is almost beyond understanding. For example, the word "medgered" in the second line, "Ah's done medgered der golden rule," is either distorted beyond recognition or utilizes outdated or regional slang. The rest of the words can be deciphered, but might not be readily apparent to a singer or listener. "Bah der road-shahd chawin' grass" disguises the phrase, "by the road-side chewing grass," and "ah's learnt mah less'n frum der speeryence school" translates to "I learned my lessons from the experience school."

The piece lists John Proctor Mills as the poet of the text not the lyricist, which indicates the words were previously written and E. Edwin Cerie set them to music. Cerie word paints a lumbering mule's gait first with quarter notes in the left hand and offbeat triplet-sixteenth notes in the right hand and then switches to offbeat eighth-notes in the right hand at the text entrance. At the words "No use talking mule got no sense," the accompaniment changes to half notes with a *quasi recitativo* marking. The marking and Cerie's detailed dynamic markings indicate he either takes this setting seriously as an art song or is mocking that tradition. The form is two-verse strophic with a codetta, which twice repeats the title lyrics and accelerates until the end.

*Hay, Beans and Rags'* dialect is somewhere in between *Who Hoodooed Me?* and *Ah's Done Seen a Caliker Mule*. Incorrect grammar is prevalent along with non-phonetic changes, such as "tho'" for "though" and the addition of unnecessary "a"s, such as

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 19.

“agetting” and “a courting.” The dialect indicates a lack of education and is combined with some large words including “avaricious” in the third verse in the *zip coon* tradition. The high-class vocabulary amidst dialect attempts White behavior without completely succeeding. The first verse further indicates the *zip coon* in the line “nifty rags to wear to town.” For the clothes to be “nifty” they imitate White dress, but due to his low wage his clothes will inevitably fall short.

The first two verses of *Hay, Beans and Rags* detail the singer’s situation without directly referencing fortune. The first verse discusses the singer’s trouble “agetting by on a job that’s lawful,” while “the tailor hits me, then the grocer man, then the gent who gets the rent he puts me on the pan.” The man has a hard time just attaining the basic needs of shelter (hay), sustenance (beans), and clothing (rags) in the jobs allowed a Black man. The second verse attacks the sanctity of Black love, painting his wife as a gold-digger and the man as an incapable provider in the lyrics, “How that woman blew my dough on Hay, Beans and Rags, Had my credit running low on Hay, Beans and Rags. So I had to give the air, to that bone and hank of hair, now I always have my share of Hay, Beans and Rags.” Finances were the ruin of this marriage as both parties wanted to spend money without consideration for their spouse; Black marriage is again portrayed in relief against White marriage, where the man would provide, and if he could not the White woman would only work to save the family until he could provide, as portrayed in domestic novels of the day.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine’s Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 98.

The last verse reveals the fortune aspect of the piece and blames the man's gambling ways for his financial troubles: "lost my dice, my main upkeep for Hay, Beans and Rags." The man turns to luck for money in the lyrics, "saw some easy money, stepped into the game. Now I'm sick when dices click, they hit me till I'm lame. Boy those gamblers took away my Hay, Beans and Rags." In a way the song serves as a moral lesson to stay away from vice as gambling and trusting luck punished the man. The piece also perpetuates the stereotype that a Black man is untrustworthy with money, losing and gaining fortune in a haphazard way.

The loose musical setting consists of block quarter-note chords without individual consideration of the text throughout the strophic three verses and varying choruses. Composer Ned Underhill includes lyrics for an alternative song called *Hair, Bones and Rags* to sing to the same music, further indicating a loose musical setting.<sup>23</sup> The music wanders from the rag and coon song genres with only scraps of syncopation, such as the second-beat, eighth-note entrance in the middle of the first phrase. There are only slight deviations from C-major tonality, like the chromatic ascension leading into the chorus. The lyrics are the focus and anchor the piece in the coon song tradition.

### **Come Back Songs**

Kansas City had some sympathies with the Old South, which Reconstruction glorified to the White population. The Southern aristocrats' amassed property and wealth

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<sup>23</sup> The alternative song portrays a sex-crazed Black man commending the new style for women as in the lyrics, "Now they've gone and bobbed their hair, Half a skirt is all they wear, That is why I like to stare at Hair, Bones and Rags."

created an Eden in the minds of working middleclass Whites and the Eden was imagined to extend to former slaves. The “come back” song genre exhibited unrealistic portrayals of slaves longing, with child-like pathos, to return or remain under White oppression. Two songs in the collections are part of the “come back” genre: *Summer Time in Dixie* (1899) by Hattie Nevada and *Pon My Soul* (1933), music by Maury Longfellow and lyrics by Dave Hogg.

Both songs depict the “Uncle Tom” caricature of the old Black man content with former slave days. Hogg’s lyrics twice emphasize the character’s age with, “Open up your ears and hear this old man say,” and “I’m intendin’ spendin’ the rest of my old days in heaven.” Nevada is vaguer about the character’s age, hinting at it through his nostalgic viewpoint. In the last verse, Nevada finally confirms his aged caricature in the line “Tho’ I’se feeble now.” These songs are the only ones in the collections denoting old age, while also being the only two without a reference to the Black men and women relations. The old Black is not perceived as a threat, so there is no need to hyper-sexualize and demean his character beyond child-like yearnings and needs. Nevada does equate musical skill associated with sexual prowess in the lyrics, “we’d dance till de chickens crow’d fer day,” “de scrapin’ ob de fiddles an’ de morning’ on de shore,” and a reference to the carefree Sambo caricature in the lyrics, “Dar was good ole uncle Sambo an’ he made us mighty gay, When he’d fiddle up an oletime tune an’ den we’d hear him sing.” Those references are, however, remembrances, not something the character is capable of now.

Both characters express childlike desire to be cared for and remain in their childhood home, although slavery is never directly referenced. The two find heaven and

contentment in a dusty little cabin, described in *'Pon My Soul* as having four little walls and compared to heaven in the chorus, "Couldn't think of anywhere the I would rather be, It's heaven 'pon my soul." While the White middleclass judged happiness and character in house size, this old man is supposed to be elated in his one-room cabin. The *Summer Time in Dixie* character is a more realistic portrayal as he longs for family, good times, and "Dixie wher de birds sing all de day," referencing the cabin only in passing in the last verse, "O I'se dreamin' ob de cabin old and dem happy days ob yore." The home is further attached to happiness, as the old man of *'Pon My Soul* is content having never left his cabin home, while the man of *Summer Time in Dixie* wishes he never left, "O I'se wandered far away from home, an' de ole folks loved so true, Lef' my dear ole Mammy weepin' Lef' my dear ole Daddy too, But I'se nebber seed a spot on earth wher I would rather stay." Staying in the cabin is associated with good character in the *'Pon My Soul* line, "Nothin's ever wrong when you're living' right." He never left, so he has never strayed from the role Whites wish to keep him in. No reference to work is ever made, replacing backbreaking labor with an image of carefree living. The *Summer Time in Dixie* character used to dance the night away and the man of *'Pon My Soul* is happy because he does not, "have to care 'bout the world and all it's worry, Don't go nowhere so I'm never in a hurry." The message conveys that Blacks were happy under slavery and miss that life.

Like the popular hits of the come back genre, such as James Bland's *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*, a yearning for old Dixie is expressed by composers unfamiliar with the place. Bland was a northerner and *Summer Time in Dixie* composer Hattie Nevada lived in Missouri all her life. Hattie Nevada was really Harriet Woodbury (1861-1953) the most

successful publisher in Kansas City known for her sentimental songs despite her lack of formal training.<sup>24</sup> Her composing and publishing career ended in 1900 after Woodbury could not repeat the success of *Letter Edged in Black* (1897), which sold over 300,000 copies.<sup>25</sup> *On the Old Missouri Shore* further reveals Nevada's lack of Southern expertise containing the same basis lyrical content of *Summer Time in Dixie* minus dialect. *I'm Just and Old Vagabond*, also by Nevada, similarly depicts an old man recalling his past and wishing for his mother, but this time it is a White man informing passersby about his happy life not yearning for a glorious past. The White man speaks without dialect and is accompanied by boring quarter notes, compared to the more active eighth-note lines in *Summer Time in Dixie*.<sup>26</sup>

*Summer Time in Dixie* is Nevada's only attempt to evoke a Black character and dialect sets the song apart from her other work. "T" and "g" are left off the end of words and "th" is often replaced with "d." Incorrect grammar is further emphasized through dialect as "I has" transforms into "I'se." A southern dialect might be the impetus behind certain changes such as "willows" changed to "willers." *Pon My Soul* utilizes less dialect with "g" left off of the end of words and "a" left off of "about." The telling dialect in both pieces is the word "mammy," as opposed to "mommy" or "mom." In *Pon My Soul* the character says that he "often thinks of mammy with her kindly eyes" and "But I suppose mammy sees and knows." And in *Summer Time in Dixie* the man "Lef my dear ole

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<sup>24</sup> Munstedt, 365.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>26</sup> Taking on a different subject, but another minority, Nevada composed *Maid of Mexico* as well, avoiding dialect and setting the song to a waltz.

Mammy weepin.’” Mammy indicates the minstrel caricature of a failed maternal figure, although both men think kindly of her. Perhaps she is still seen as kindly and successful, because in this case mammy is imagined in a slave context where White influence on her character is still prevalent.

Musically *Summer Time in Dixie* depends on tempo markings and dynamics to convey the lyrical sentimentality. For example, the first verse starts at *piano*, suddenly jumping to *forte* at “nebber seed a spot on earth wher I would rather stay than my happy home.” A crescendo further builds the drama along with direction to “ad lib.” It switches to a *rallentando* and slight diminuendo on the words leading into the chorus, “Dixie wher de birds sing all de day.” “Day” is held with a fermata on one of the highest notes of the piece. The same technique is used in the next two verses on the lyrics, “O it’s summer time in Dixie an’ de Blue birds on de wing.” This makes the chorus anti-climatic as the lines are all descending and the last line, “Yes it’s summer ‘long de Lousiana shore,” is marked with a diminuendo and *rallentando*. The accompaniment echoes the tune and gently fades out.

‘*Pon My Soul* better fits ragtime categorization with dotted-eight sixteenth rhythms, as opposed to *Summer Time in Dixie*’s straight eighth-notes. Eighth-note triplet melodies also add rhythmic interest. The song also contains ukulele tuning and chords, further adding a less “parlor” feel to the piece. The words “‘pon my soul” are set apart with quarter notes and half notes. At their first appearance there is a melismatic ascension on “soul,” but at the end of the chorus the line descends to end on a strong tonic.

The three-decade disparity between the pieces could account for the different settings. The publishing dates raise other questions. *Summer Time in Dixie* falls within reconstruction and the portrayal historically meshes, but why a “come back” song in 1933, published by the largest and most prolific publisher in Kansas City, J.W. Jenkins?<sup>27</sup> *Pon My Soul* most likely reflects an imagined distant past in the midst of the Great Depression and a crime-filled Black section of Kansas City. By 1933, Kansas City was fully segregated with Blacks relegated to the East side of town filled with gambling dens and drinking establishments. Police brutality and the media exaggerated Black violence to the public. *Pon My Soul* represents a Black man separate from the White populace, but contentedly living in a peaceful subordinate role, the “well-behaved” Black man for which the White populace yearned.

### **Dat Mornin’ in De Sky**

*Dat Mornin’ in De Sky* is the only piece in the collections with a well-known composer, Blind Boone. Born John William Boone,<sup>28</sup> Blind Boone was a mulatto with a Black mother and an unknown father.<sup>29</sup> The conditions of the composer’s birth alone are representative of the precarious position of Black women in society, and Boone’s life offers a clue to the performance history of the songs in this collection. The blind performer toured the Midwest with a female singer, a piano, and other instrumentalists

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<sup>27</sup> Munstedt, 358.

<sup>28</sup> Jack A. Batterson, *Blind Boone: Missouri’s Ragtime Pioneer* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998) 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

often performing in churches.<sup>30</sup> Boone performed for Black and White audiences, most often separately, with a program of classical, popular, and religious tunes.<sup>31</sup> The popular music included his own coon songs and rags demonstrating coon songs were performed for Black and White audiences. Boone's coon song compositions perpetuated the minstrel caricatures with a focus on food stereotypes, such as a love of watermelon and chicken in songs like *Georgia Melon*, *Dat Only Chicken Pie* and *De Melon Season's Over*.<sup>32</sup>

*Dat Mornin' in De Sky* is less coon song than part of the religious genre, although coon song caricature references are included in the second verse mention of a "chicken stealer." The lyrics ponder and comment on the judgment every man must face "dat morning' in de sky" pointing out the sins of the Black community while uplifting the same community in the chorus, which promises a dignity not afforded in this life:

So I tell you ma chilen' you had better be ready,  
So when 'a we come to die;  
When dey summin' us up we kin stan' right steady,  
Dat morning' in de sky.

Gamblers are also singled out with a striking double entendre in the lyrics, "An' den de gambler what plays all night, An' roll dem bones 'till broad day light, They've got him down in black an' white." In this case the black and white could be the black ink on a white page or the black dots on the white dice. Boone also references the perceived corruption of Black clergy in the lyrics:

When dey call up de deacon an' de elder's case,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 78.

Dat morning' in de sky,  
As I'll tell yo'brethren if you aint ture,  
Your religion down here up dar won't do,  
Der'll be heaps ob dem what won't get through.

In the fourth verse, Boone depicts thieves as the *zip coon* character with lyrics saying God “won’t stan’ no show up der,” and “it will do no good for to comb his hair.” His stolen dress of “watch and chain” along with a “full-dress suit” imitate the White dress, which he has stolen literally and figuratively. Overall the lyrics reflect the Booker T. Washington philosophy of behavior for the Black community: lead an upright life and respect will follow.

The fifth and last verse turns attention to the White population’s sins and the equal judgment waiting in the afterlife. The lyrics “Not only black man steal but white man too,” and “Dey gwine to read all cases without any flaws” must have sparked controversy in late 1890s Missouri. It is unclear whether Boone would have performed this piece in front of White audiences or perhaps left out the last verse, but the lyrics are printed in the Carl Hoffman edition in black and white. The chorus does offer clues to the performance practice with a marking “everybody git in on de Chorus,” which was probably spoken to the audience the second or third time through. The chorus is potentially sung twice after each verse as the first and second ending indicates. The communal singing resembles the church hymn tradition and further intimates religious connotations.

The musical setting of Boone’s song demonstrates a musical sophistication missing in the other pieces; Boone’s experience as a ragtime composer is evident in the complicated and intricate rhythms with sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth note rhythms in the right hand against straight eighth-note rhythms in the left hand. Boone considers the singers,

simplifying the accompaniment line after the introduction to allow the vocals to draw the main focus. The emphasis is on the last line of every verse with a *fermata* on the last word and accented quarter notes in the left hand leading to a *fermata*. “Dat mornin’ in de sky” follows each time and “mornin’” is decorated with a sixteenth-note melisma. The chorus echoes this idea with an accented line leading to a *fermata* on “steady” and the same setting of “Dat mornin’ in de sky.”

*Dat Mornin’ in De Sky* is heavily seasoned with dialect, but contains no non-phonetic changes. Instead the dialect reflects the speech of rural Missouri Blacks, which Boone continually encountered and presumably spoke. The same is true of the prevalent grammatical errors from the first line, “Ise a wondrin.” The included slang lightens the serious religious mood, referring to God as “de dude” in the first line of the fourth verse. Other humorous lines include, “Dars an’ extra book for de mother-in-laws” in the fifth verse’s discussion of judgment. The lyrical content is mostly from the third-person point of view, unlike the majority of first person point of view lyrics contained in the collections; this is allowed as Boone was a member of the Black community commenting from the inside. The White community allows only first person caricatures from White composers who become “the truth” instead of outright commenting on the faults of the Black community.

The portrayals in the Kansas City collections reveal stereotypes accepted throughout the White community. The Black community is contained in the coon song genre with no other representations.

## CHAPTER 7

### WHAT IS NOT IN THE COLLECTION AND CONCLUSIONS

Subject matter not found in the Kansas City collections reveals almost as much as what is found. Songs defining the city, whether they extol places or institutions, all ignore the existence of the Black population even when comparable places and institutions are prominent. There also seems to be an expiration date on Black portrayals in the sheet music medium. Although the collections contain sheet music up through the 1960s, representations of Blacks are absent after the 1930s. Kansas City's silence subtly speaks intentional ignorance.

Baseball songs are the most glaring oversight in relationship to the Black population. The Kansas City A's team existed from 1955 to 1967 and several songs were composed in their honor, including *Let's Play Ball with the A's* (1955) by Herb Six and Thad Wilkerson. Throughout their stay the A's failed to accomplish many wins, yet the Black team, the Kansas City Monarchs, is generally acknowledged as "the most successful African American baseball team in American History," boasting Jackie Robinson as a team member.<sup>1</sup> The team was the pride of Kansas City to both the White and Black population, but was never commemorated in song.

Segregated amusement parks are also unequally represented in song. *Electric Park Rag* (1910) by Jean Ledeis is a piano solo with a cover highlighting the electric lights, and *Fairyland Park and You* (1927) by William R. Clay serves as an advertisement jingle

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<sup>1</sup> Roger D. Launius, *Seasons in the Sun: The Story of Big League Baseball in Missouri* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 14.

emphasizing the pool, dancing, and rides. Both parks excluded the Black population and excuse the exclusion through the imagined bigoted patron.<sup>2</sup> As an alternative for the Black population, Liberty Park opened on 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Raytown Road on May 15, 1926. The president of Liberty Park described the features as, “a mammoth bathing beach, the largest in the city, picnic grounds with ovens, and a dance pavilion featuring only the best orchestras.”<sup>3</sup> The park was advertised as the only amusement park in the United States exclusively for African Americans,<sup>4</sup> yet there are no songs in the Kansas City sheet music collections mentioning Liberty Park.

The collections include songs, dating from the later 1930s, full of city pride, such as *The Gateway of the West: Kansas City, the Heart of America* (1930) and *The Kansas City Zone Song* (1936). This continues into the 1950s with songs like *Plaza Lights* (1951) and *Kansas City: My Hometown* (1950). None of these songs acknowledge the presence of the Black population. As the White population sought to erase Blacks from sight in their neighborhoods, they also erased them from the burgeoning city identity.

## Conclusions

This research is not designed to encourage performance. Besides controversial lyrics, the songs investigated here boast a musical quality that is considered inferior compared with classical rags, such as the works of Scott Joplin. So why should

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<sup>2</sup> There were rare exceptions, at least at Electric Park, if a Black group was willing to rent out the entire park, as one group did for three days in September of 1922. Charles Coulter, *Take Up the Black Man's Burden* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 236.

<sup>3</sup> Chester A. Franklin, “Editorial,” *The Call*, April 2, 1926.

<sup>4</sup> Coulter, 237.

researchers study music whose subject matter precludes it from performance?<sup>5</sup> Whether or not these sixteen songs have stood the test of time, they are representative of the popular music of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Comparing rags with classical piano rags, Berlin admits, “Quite possibly only a few ragtime enthusiasts today would be interested in these songs. But ignoring the fact that this music was considered ragtime conceals the historical truth and inevitably leads to serious misinterpretations.”<sup>6</sup> Studies of less popular rags reveal a historical layer often ignored in ragtime discussions.

Ragtime arguably was the first truly American music, even if its creators did not enjoy full American citizenship. Just like the gypsies in Hungary, the style of an oppressed race became the sound of the nation and a sound ripe for exploitation. Also like the gypsies, Black performers and composers catered to the audience and perpetuated the coon song stereotypes in order to thrive financially.

Ragtime is an important link in the history of other American music, as jazz, blues, and other popular styles all have roots in the ragtime tradition. Ragtime rhythms were integral to the cakewalk and march, while ragtime’s strict notation influenced the Original Dixieland Band.<sup>7</sup> Rag’s original emphasis of beats two and four and rag’s syncopation are characteristics of almost all forms of jazz.

The examined sixteen pieces are also components of a historical line of stereotypes. Garrett states “musical racialization requires continuous maintenance and is always subject

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<sup>5</sup> Excepting *Dat Mornin’ in De Sky*, which does not have racially inappropriate lyrics.

<sup>6</sup> Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 7.

<sup>7</sup> William J Schafer and Johannes Riedel, *The Art of Ragtime* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 138.

to transformation.”<sup>8</sup> The continuation and transformation of coon stereotypes are still prevalent in American culture. McElya traces the *mammy* figure that is still present in grocery stores and pantries across America in the pancake marketing creation, Aunt Jemima.<sup>9</sup> Julia Jordan-Zachary discusses the *jezebel* stereotype in her recent book along with the *welfare queen*, who shares characteristics with the *mammy* stereotype, and shows that coon song-perpetuated caricatures still exist.<sup>10</sup> It is easy to find the stereotypes in recent lyrics, such as these lyrics from rapper Snoop Dogg’s song *Those Gurlz*: “Those girls, they don’t mean a thing to me, I was just playin’ the game... I don’t love hoes or respect what they say.” Snoop Dogg portrays the bully character demonstrated in the examined songs *I Wants My Sunday Nights* and *When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow*, as well as the *jezebel* caricature. Studying coon songs reveals stereotype origins, which could ideally lead to their dissolution.

Studying coon songs can also inform period sheet music studies of other minorities. In this thesis, dialect studies connected the portrayal of minorities to the Irish population, and the portrayal of Black women was compared with the portrayal of Native American women. Further comparisons could include the shift in popularity from coon songs to the “Indian Intermezzo” as a nostalgic look at Native Americans before they were confined to

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: the Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 52.

<sup>10</sup> Julia S Jordan-Zachary, *Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 28.

reservations.<sup>11</sup> The yearning for an imagined past mirrors the interest in “come back” songs like the examined *Pon My Soul* and *Summer Time in Dixie*. An in-depth comparison of women minorities represented in Kansas City published sheet music, such as Black, Native American, and Irish women, would further divulge attitudes of the Kansas City White population.

Revealing White perceptions of Black Kansas City citizens is the most important function of this study. Music writer Edward A. Lippman describes art creation, “In creating art we objectify ourselves and in perceiving it we become part of a new humanity.”<sup>12</sup> Coon songs are a manifestation of White stereotypes that are composer objectified and audience perceived as truth. Cemented generalizations of an entire societal group can be just as damaging as bombs thrown at their homes. Dennison describes the aftermath: “the superimposition of an already misshapen black image through the medium of popular song further ‘distanced’ the public from reality” and added that “the 1890s through World War One must surely be counted as the most damaging to the black character and the true black image.”<sup>13</sup> Ewen further states the importance of popular music’s influence on society, stating, “Tin Pan Alley was a mirror to and a voice of America during a period of formidable growth and change. The fads and fashions, the fluctuating mores, tastes, and moral attitudes, the current events and economic crises, the passing moods and social forces – all that made up American social history – were caught,

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<sup>11</sup> Schafer and Riedel, 118.

<sup>12</sup> Edward A. Lippman, *A Humanistic Philosophy of Music* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2006), 38.

<sup>13</sup> Dennison, 423.

fixed and interpreted by Tin Pan Alley in words and music that were on everybody's lips."<sup>14</sup> Coon songs represent a part of humanity that most would like to forget, but are a part of Kansas City and the nation's historical narrative, and a part largely missing from most other mediums. The attitudes embedded in sheet music reveal the reasons behind the unfair treatment under the law and segregation of Kansas City's Black population.

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<sup>14</sup> David Ewen, *The Life and Death of Tin Pan Alley* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1964), xiv.

**APPENDIX A**  
**SHEET MUSIC LYRICS**

*Ah's Done See'd Er Callicker Mule (1923)*

**Poem by John Proctor Mills**

**Music by E. Edwin Crierie**

**Published by E. Edwin Crierie**

**Located in Labudde Special Collections**

Verse 1:

Ah's done see'd er callicker mule

An',ah luck am gwine ter change,

Ah's done medgered der golden rule

An mah life be's mighty strange;

No use talking mule got no sense,

Streaked and striped lak er old boa'd fence,

An' ah knows dis niggah he haint no fool,

Ah's done see'd er callicker mule.

Verse 2:

Ah's done see'd er callicker mule

Bah der road-shahd chawin' grass,

Ah wuz er fraid ez er crazy fool

An' ah sho did go bah fass;

No use laggin' ba der sahd uv der road,

Fur mah lack wern't stayin' whar der grass wuz mowed,  
Ah's learnt mah less'n frum der speeryence school,  
Ah's done see'd er callicker mule,  
Ah's done see'd er callicker mule.

***Dat Mornin' in De Sky (1899)***

**Words and Music by Blind Boone**

**Published by Carl Hoffman**

**Located in LaBudde Special Collections**

Verse 1: Ise a wondrin what deys gwine to do,

Dat mornin' in de sky;

When dey draw dem records on me an' you

Dat mornin' in de sky,

Deys gwine to call us all up one by one,

An' tell us all' what we have done,

Daz'll be no use for try to run,

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Chorus: So I tell you ma chilen' you had better be ready,

So when 'a we come to die;

When dey summin' us up we kin stan' right steady

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Verse 2: An' de chicken stealer he's got to stay,

Dat mornin' in de sky;

An' hear his part case he can't get 'way

Dat mornin' in de sky,

An den de gambler what plays all night,

An' roll dem bones 'till broad day light,

They've got him down in black an' white,

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Chorus

Verse 3: It will be a surprise to de human race,

Dat mornin' in de sky;

When dey call up de deacon an' de elder's case,

Dat mornin' in de sky,

An' I'll tell yo' brethren if you ain't true,

Your religion down here up dar won't do,

Dar'll be heaps ob dem what won't get through,

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Chorus

Verse 4: An' de dude, won't stan' no show up der,

Dat mornin' in de sky,

It will do no good for to comb his hair,

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Dey's gwine to tell 'bout de watch and chain he took,

An' de full-dress suit dat made him look;

Dey got it down in dat big book,

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Chorus

Verse 5: An' deys gwine to fine out befor' der through,

Dat mornin' in de sky,

Not only black man steal but white man too,

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Dey gwine to read all cases without any flaws,

An' nothin' will be left out there because;

Dars an' extra book for de mother-in-laws,

Dat mornin' in de sky.

Chorus

***Hay, Beans and Rags (1925)***

**Words and Music by Ned Underhill**

**Published by Jack Riley Music**

**Located in LaBudde Special Collections**

Verse 1:

Oh, I have an awful time agetting by

On a job that's lawful tho' I work and try.

First the tailor hits me, then the grocer man,

Then the gent who gets the rent he puts me on the pan.

Chorus 1:

I want little here below, just Hay, Beans and Rags

All I make I have to blow on Hay, Beans, and Rags.

Just some hay to lay me down, dish of beans done nice and brown,

Nifty rags to wear to town, my Hay Beans and Rags.

Verse 2:

Once I went a courting, got myself a wife,

Promised her supporting for her nat'ral life.

“Two can live” she told me, “Just as cheap as one.”

Someone lied I'm satisfied because it can't be done.

Chorus 2:

How that woman blew my dough on Hay, Beans and Rags

Had my credit running low on Hay, Beans and Rags.

So I had to give the air, to that bone and hank of hair,

Now I always have my share of Hay, Beans and Rags.

Verse 3:

Once I got ambitious, bought a pair of bones,

Feeling avaricious for some precious stones.

Saw some easy money, stepped into the game.

Now I'm sick when dices click, they hit me till I'm lame.

Chorus 3:

Boy, those gamblers took away my Hay, Beans and Rags  
Didn't leave a cent to pay for Hay, Beans and Rags.  
All I did was read and weep, lost my shoes and lost my sleep,  
Lost my dice, my main upkeep for Hay, Beans and Rags.  
Supplemented optional *Hair, Bones and Rags*

***Honey O!***

**Words and Music by Percy Gaunt**

**Published by T. B. Harms**

**Located in Kansas City Public Library Special Collections**

Verse 1: There's the coon from Alabama, way down South,

Honey O! Honey O!

His feet are very large and just the same his mouth,

Honey O! Honey O!

He's just a trifle crazy, And oh! he is so lazy;

But at motion he's a "daisy,"

Honey O! Honey O!

Chorus: Get up, you lazy coon, go w'ay from me!

Rise up, you lazy loon, I hate to see!

Honey, you rascal black, you are so slow;

Don't you ever come back, Honey O!

Verse 2: There's the coon who's always looking for a tip,

Honey O! Honey O!

He never lets a good thing slip-e, slip-e-dip,

Honey O! Honey O!

He's yaller and he's sassy, His ways are very brassy,

And he whistles "Bonnie Lassie,"

Honey O! Honey O!

Chorus: whistled

Verse 3: There's ole Uncle Rasmus walking with a cane,

Honey O! Honey O!

And just you watch him as he shuffles down the lane,

Honey O! Honey O!

He is so fond of pickin' A turkey or a chicken,

He would take it for a lickin',

Honey O! Honey O!

Chorus

***I Wants Ma Sunday Nights (1898)***

**Words by Albert H. Brown**

**Music by Chas. N. Daniels**

**Published by Carl Hoffman**

**Located in Kansas City Public Library Special Collections**

Verse 1: Oh I got somethin' dats a troublin' me bad,

I'se a losin' ma mind, I'se a goin' mad:  
I'se so turned and twisted I can't think.  
It's a all about ma baby Lou,  
Dat gal does things I can't see through, It's enough,  
To drive dis "nig" to drink.  
She gives me clothes, and she gives me sheckels,  
An' wart eradicators to remove ma freckles,  
And she never asks her man to take her out:  
But dars one thing dats might funny,  
She won't let me call on Sunday, Dat worries me,  
And dats just why I shout.  
Chorus 1 and 2: Oh, oh, ma baby, I love you true,  
But to me you done de "dooty doo"  
I wants yes I wants ma Sunday nights.  
Get any other thing as soon as I speak,  
Call any other night in de week,  
But I wants, yes I wants ma Sunday nights,  
Yes indeedie, baby  
Verse 2: I thought one Sunday I'd a play fly "cop,"  
So I staid away from a niggah "hop":  
Just to watch ma baby's house an hour or so.  
At just about ten minutes to eight,

A swell niggah barber walked up to de gate,  
An' he knocked, yes he kocked on ma baby's door.  
He went inside, turned de glim down low,  
An' he an' ma a baby sat a down on de flo',  
And on her hand he put a diamond ring:  
I jumped through de window into ma home,  
Carved dat niggah to de bne,  
And de to ma baby I did sing.

(Repeat chorus)

Verse 3: Says I to ma baby I'se ma nat'al born self,  
Since I laid dat a niggah on de shelf:  
Guess I didn't put de rollers under him.  
When I gets mad it aint no fun,  
I'se a thousan' times worse dan a gatlin' gun,  
An even, a white man's chance is slim.  
But now ma "babe," says I'm her steady,  
Dat I can come an' go, when a I gets ready,  
And she will cause me no more trouble or fights:  
So I promised I'd do nothin' rash,  
Since with her I'm ready cash  
An' ever since, I've had ma Sunday nights.  
Chorus 3: Oh, oh, ma baby I love you true,

Since you stopped doin' de "dooty doo"

For now I've a got ma Sunday nights.

Things runnin' easy as a chainless bike,

We are de only babies on de "pike,"

For I got, yes I got ma Sunday nights.

(Repeated)

***It Takes a Long Tall Brown-Skin Gal (1912)***

**Words by Marshall Walker**

**Music by William E. Skidmore**

**Published by Skidmore Music Company**

**Located in LaBudde Special Collections**

Verse 1: Old Dean Johnson was a prechin' man

The black sky pilot of old Dixieland

Had never miss'd a Sunday rain or shine

Was always in his pulpit right on time.

One day a dark-skin damsel blow'd in town

Somebody started scandalation 'round

Next Sunday morn they found the church door lock'd

This was the only word the Deacon left his lonely flock

Chorus: It takes a Long Tall Brown-Sking Gal, to make a preacher lay his bible down.

For twenty years I'se pass'd "Joy" by but now I'm goin' to get mine 'till I die.

I always thought that preachin' was my line but since I met this gal I chang'd my min'

It takes a Long Tall Brown-Skin Gal to make a preacher lay his Bible down.

(Repeated)

Verse 2: When Deacon Johnson took his "Brown" away

The congregation tried to make him stay

They promis'd him if he would not leave town

The wouldn't come between him and his "Brown"

The deacon studied and declar'd at last

It ain't no use, my preachin' days is past.

I never realized where Heaven lies,

Until today when I look'd down into my baby's eyes.

Chorus

***Little Brown Baby Mine (1921)***

**Words and Music by Carson J. Robison**

**Published by Carson J. Robison**

**Located in LaBudde Special Collections**

Verse 1: Little brown baby ob mine

Sweet as a rose on de vine

Think I can see dat ol' san'man a comin'

Yo' eyes are dreamy,

While mammy's hummin'

When de big moon starts to peep  
Time you was goin' to sleep  
Mamy will hold you and keep 'way de goblins  
Little brown baby mine.  
Verse 2: Little brown baby ob mine  
Someday yo' mammy will pine  
When you have growed up an' lef' de ol' cabin,  
I'll wait to meet you,  
Some day in heben,  
An' when dey lay me away  
Up in de sky I will pray  
Good angels keep you and bring you to mammy,  
Little brown baby mine.

***Mournin' Fer You (1926)***

**Words and Music by Mobre Earle**

**Published by Mobre Earle**

**Located in Kansas City Public Library Special Collections**

Verse 1: Baby ah's still weepin' an' moanin' fer you,  
'Cause I tried dat udder nigger an' he won't do  
But honey you's done dead as you's cher gwine to be,  
Nothin' but your ghost ken eber come back to me.

Chorus: Weepin' an' moanin'

Aint gwine to bring you back,

But heah ah is,

All dis week been wearin' black

Sighin' an' cryin'

All but dyin' fer you,

Lookin' an' longin' fer some coon just as true.

Verse 2: 'Bout dat insurance money you left fer me,

Oh man my swell mornin' outfit you should see.

Sam Brown sezs lasses you show looks good,

Lize you could love me if you only would.

Chorus

Verse 3: You should heah Jim Jones tale of woe,

How he's down an' out, won't ah loan him a dollar or so.

Rastus Smith sezs sugar don't cher love me good,

Ah sezs nigger if you had insurance maybe ah could.

Chorus

***'Pon My Soul (1933)***

**Words by Dave Hogg**

**Music by Maury Longfellow**

**Published by Jenkins Music Company**

**Located in Kansas City Public Library Special Collections**

Verse 1: Everything is grand here in my old Dixieland,

Nothin's ever wrong when you're livin' right.

Birdies in the trees singin' happy melodies

Music in this air mornin' noon and night.

Sittin' here waitin' for judgement day,

Ain't feared o' dyin' 'cause I've seen my day.

Heart chuck full of joy, just like when I was a boy,

Open up your ears and hear this old man say.

Chorus: All be myself in my little dusty cabin,

Nobody knows 'bout the comfort I've been havin'

Hidden from the world, by these four little walls,

It's heaven 'pon my soul.

Don't have to care 'bout the world and all it's worry,

Don't go nowhere so I'm never in a hurry

I'm intendin' spendin' the rest of my old days in heaven 'pon my soul.

Often think of mammy with her kindly eyes,

Wish that she was here to share my paradise;

But I suppose mammy sees and knows,

It just has to be, 'till angels come for me;

I'll be here al alone in my little dusty cabin,

Keep livin' on in the comfort I've been havin'

Couldn't think of anywhere that I would rather be,

It's heaven 'pon my soul.

Chorus repeat

***Pray for the Lights to Go Out (1916)***

**Words by Renton Tunnah**

**Music by William E. Skidmore**

**Published by Skidmore Music Company**

**Located in LaBudde Special Collections**

Verse 1: Father was a deacon in a hard shell church, Way down South where I was born.

People used to come to church from miles around Just to hear the Holy work go on.

Father grabs a sister 'round the neck and says, Sister won't you sing this song

The sister tells the deacon that she didn't have time

Felt religion coming on.

Just then somebody got up turn'd the lights all out

And you ought to heard that sister shout

Chorus : She hollered Brother, if you want to spread joy,

Just pray for the lights to stay (go) out.

She called on Deacon for to kneel and pray,

You ought to heard that sister shout

Throw'd up both hands and got way back,

Took two step forw'd and ball'd the Jack

She hollered Brother, if you want to spread job,

Just pray for the lights to stay (go) out.

Verse 2: Father tried to quieten down his lovin' flock, Call'd on all the saints above;

All that he could hear way down there in the dark Was baby, Honey, turtle dove.

Deacon grabs his bible firmly in his hand, Pray'd to be show'd wrong from right.

Just then as if his pray'rs were answered from above,

Someone got up turn'd on the light,

He feels himself a slippin' grabs the first girl near

And she sings this sweet song in his ear,

(Chorus)

***She's a Mean Job (1921)***

**Words by George Landis**

**Music by Jimmy Selby**

**Published by George Landis and Jimmy Selby**

**Located in LaBudde Special Collections**

Verse 1: Know a girlie, Vampy girlie, knockout.

Just a bubble, lots of trouble, blowout.

Although lazy, sets 'em crazy helpless

There are reasons I'll confess

Chorus 1: Folks turn 'round to stare at her

She's a mean job.

Traffic halts while motors whirr.

She's a mean job.

With one look into her eyes,

Men go home and beat their wives.

She fools them and cools them

Telling pretty lies.

Never smokes but rolls her own,

She's a mean job.

And though I never heard she was ill

Still Doctors send prescriptions

for Ginger ale afflictions.

She leads the mob 'cause

She's a mean job.

Verse 2: Never worries, never hurries, spiteful

Disconcerting, always flirting frightful.

Voguey dresses, lots of guesses

Gossip, But the boys say she's a pip.

Chorus 2: Folks turn 'round to stare at her

She's a Mean job.

Traffic halts while motors whirr,

She's a Mean job.

When she trips her dainty feet,

Men fall prostrate on the street.  
She fools them and cools them,  
Practicing deceit.  
Never smokes but rolls her own  
She's a Mean job.  
And though I never heard that she would bet,  
Yet Once she stopped the races,  
The horses hid their faces.  
She leads the mob 'cause She's a mean job.

***Shut Yoah Eyes (1897)***

**Words by Dreamor R. Drake**

**Music by H.O. Wheeler**

**Published by C. O. Brokaw**

**Located in Kansas City Public Library Special Collections**

Shut yoah eyes now, Can't wait no how  
Mammy's got a heap ob work to do.  
'Possum's burnin' Cakes wants turnin'  
Mammy haint no time foah rockin' you!  
Big Moon shines bright Watch you all night  
Brier Fox can't git you ef he tries,  
Won't be tryin' Less youse cryin'

Bettah be a shuttin' ob yoah eyes.

Chorus: Old Brier Fox comes a creepin' down de chimney

Catchin' little niggers when dey cries,

Big Moon helps him to find a pickaninny,

Yo bettah be a shuttin' ob yoah eyes.

Just yo shut yoah eyes, you yaller pickaninny

Shut yoah eyes you little yaller coon,

Big Moon sees dat you aint a slippin' any,

Brier Fox'll be heah purty soon.

Verse 2: Shut yoah eyes now, Won't grow nohow

Never git no bigger than you be!

Birds am sleepin' Possum's peepin'

Peepin' 'round de branches ob de tree.

Hoecake's done now

Can't have one now

Gwine to put 'em up dar on de shelf

No use lookin' Possum's cookin'

Little Pickaninny's got to rock hisself.

Chorus

### ***Somebody's Done Me Wrong (1918)***

**Words by Marshall Walker**

**Music by Will E. Skidmore**

**Published by Will E. Skidmore**

**Located in LaBudde Special Collections**

Verse 1: Way down south' there lives a cullud preachin' man (preachin' man, preachin' man, preachin' man)

Spreadin' joy to ev'rybody in the land (in the land, in the land , in the land)

Last Sunday night he looked his congregation in the face (in the face, in the face, in the face)

And says to them you got a get somebody in my place (in my place, in my place, in my place)

The elders ask'd him why And this was his reply

Chorus 1: Now brothers and sisters I been preachin' to you,

But somebody's done me wrong;

I stood for you stealin' from the contribution box,

As it passes along

For years I preach'd the Gospel truth to each and ev'ry one,

But when you Deacons try to steal my "Brown Skin Gal" I'm done.

Now brothers and sisters I been preachin' to you,

But somebody's done me wrong.

Verse 2: Tother night I got home just 'bout ten o' clock, (ten o' clock, ten o' clock, ten o' clock)

Lights was low I turned 'em up Oh! what a shock (what a shock, what a shock, what a shock)

Now what you think was goin' on right there before my eyes, ('fore my eyes, 'fore my eyes, 'fore my eyes)

My bossom friend old deacon Jones, had my wife hypnotized (hypnotized, hypnotized, hypnotized)

He started this here row, His wife's a widow now.

Chorus 2: Now brothers and sisters I been preachin' to you,

But somebody's done me wrong;

I stood for you stealin' from the contribution box,

As it passes along

The good book says "Thou Shalt Not Covet" that the Gospel law,

I'll bet I'll break them Ten Commandments on some Deacons jaw.

Now brothers and sisters I been preachin' to you,

But somebody's done me wrong.

Chorus 3: Now brothers and sisters I been preachin' to you,

But somebody's done me wrong;

I stood for you stealin' from the contribution box,

As it passes along

I always tried to let the other Deacons wives alone,

And you ain't got no right to come a "messin'" 'round my home.

Now brothers and sisters I been preachin' to you,

But somebody's done me wrong.

*Summer Time in Dixie*

**Words and Music by Hattie Nevada**

**Published by H.H. Woodbury**

**Located in Labudde Special Collections**

Verse 1: O I'se wondered far away from home,

An' de ole folks loved so true,

Lef' my dear ole Mammy weepin'

Lef' my dear ole Daddy too,

But I'se nebber seed a spot on earth whar I would rather stay,

Then my happy home in Dixie whar de birds sing all de day.

Chorus: When de Bluebirds swing high up in de willers

An' de roses bloom again around de door,

Don I know dat it's summer time in Dixie,

Yes it's summer 'long de Lousiana shore.

Chorus: repeated

*When the Cold, Cold Wind Begins to Blow (1901)*

**Words by Albert H. Brown**

**Music by Chas. N. Daniels**

**Published by Daniels and Russell**

**Located in Kansas City Public Library Special Collections**

Verse 1: Baby don't you know you made a big mistake,

When you turned me loose,

I used to be a picture card in your deck,

Now I am a deuce.

Remember in de evnin', when the stars were bright,

How you used to put your arms around my neck so tight,

And you loved me so, That you wouldn't let me go Till de sun was shinin' bright.

But now you come and tell me that the game am off.

Just why I can't see.

Why gal the very clothes a hangin' on yo' back, they all belongs to me,

And what yo' gwine to do, when they am gone.

Don't think I'm goin' to leave you any stuff to pawn,

For when I leave's you, all my money goes too, Just as sure as you are born.

Chorus: You don't need a no sealskin sack,

In de summer time

An' you don't need a no kitchen stove, Nor nuthin' else of mine.

But tell me what you are a gwine to do,

When it begins to snow,

And when de cold, cold wind begins to blow.

Verse 2: Who's a gwine to help yo' hang yo' washin' out,

On de old clothes line,

An what you gwine to do for poles, to prop it up,  
I think them poles is mine.  
I know you'll think I'm stingy, but as sure as sin,  
I am stubborn as an army mule, when I begin,  
An' I won't let No other nigger set, In de same chair I set in.  
Now baby don't yo think the proper thing to do,  
Just to break the ice,  
Would be for you to press yo' ruby lips to mine, an' kiss 'em once or twice,  
And tell me that your heart for me is true,  
A thumpin' an' a jumpin' like it used to do,  
An you'll not regret, That I'm livin' here yet,  
I will be so good to you. (Repeat Chorus)

***Who Hoodooed Me? (1926)***

**Words and Music by K. R. Barnum**

**Published by K. R. Barnum**

**Located in Kansas City Public Library Special Collections**

Verse 1: Now something's got me hoodooed, I believe it's come stay

And it's never going to leave me, Not before the judgement day,

The road that I've been trav'ling, Is the wrong road I am sure,

I must have missed the mainroad, And got off on a detour.

Chorus 1: Who hoodooed me? Who hoodooed me?

I look for angels and devils appear  
I guess I'll just detour again for hell must be near.  
If things don't turn, I'll just adjourn,  
I have been watching each day and night,  
Waiting for ships that sailed out of sight  
Who? Who? Who? Who?  
O who hoodooed me?  
Verse 2: The day that I got married, Thru the process of the law,  
They surely got the papers mixed, The worst I ever saw.  
They gave me a dog's license, Put the collar on to stay,  
I know because I've always lived, A dog's life since that day.  
Chorus 2: Who hoodooed me? Who hoodooed me?  
That little angel to the altar I led  
But when her wings get sprouted they were horns instead.  
She got my goat, She sunk my boat  
She buzzed around me just like a bee,  
That wasn't all that she did to me  
Who? Who? Who? Who?  
O who hoodooed me?

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## **Vita**

AnnaMarie Ogunmola was born AnnaMarie Knapp on February 26, 1982 in McCook, Nebraska. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Central Methodist College in 2004 with a Bachelors of Music Education. While attending Central Methodist she served as the band manager for three years, which included planning an annual tour, managing the music library, and planning a regional marching band competition. After her bachelors AnnaMarie taught band to grades sixth grade through high school in Campbell, Missouri for one year. The next year she took a position teaching kindergarten through twelfth grade general music, band, and choir in Higbee, Missouri, in order to be closer to her husband. She taught there from 2005-2007. She began her studies at University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2008 and is projected to graduate with a Masters of Music in Musicology in May 2011. During her time there AnnaMarie was awarded the LeRoy Pogemiller Scholarship and a Graduate Teaching Assistantship in the musicology department.