

UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

REIMAGINING THE BLUES: A NEW  
NARRATIVE FOR 21ST CENTURY  
BLUES MUSIC

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work reported herein was composed by and originated entirely from me. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and references are given in the list of sources.

Nigel Martin (2018)

## **Abstract**

This project explores the extent to which blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is linked to its cultural past through identification and examination of the key concepts and relationships that may contribute to a contemporary understanding of the blues and cultural artefacts, as circulated and consumed in popular music practices.

Despite the vast amount of scholarship on blues music, including revisionist literature that emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the first decade of this century, there has been no singular study of popular music or the blues that has specifically addressed the sociocultural and musicological links between the traditions of the past in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century popular music in sufficient depth and so research into contemporary interpretations of blues music as it exists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century remains relatively scarce.

This project provides an account of the cultural resonances and development of the blues genre in popular music culture to establish what the blues means, how it means, and to who it is meaningful through the formulation of a conceptual framework offered as a unique methodological tool for identifying and exploring blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Within this interdisciplinary framework, concepts including those concerned with technological mediation, intertextuality, cultural identity, memory, and meaning, are mobilised, refined, and combined in order to reveal and explore problematic relationships that exist in and between concepts of race, place, and technology as connected to blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Through an ethnomusicological strategy of enquiry and largely inductive approach to the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, the results of analyses conducted using a broad range of methods including music theoretic analysis, semiotics, intertextuality, survey, and interview are presented in order to both address how and why a contemporary blues music revival may be perceived to be taking place and to offer a fresh historical review of the context in which the blues has developed from a 21<sup>st</sup> century platform.

This study finds that popular music performers and consumers are continually reimagining the blues through engagement with the traditions of the past and accordingly argues for an extension to the boundaries of blues music in its stylistic and cultural categorisation in 21<sup>st</sup>-century discourse. It is also argued that the results of research presented here also go some way in illustrating both how such engagement with the traditions of the past may directly reflect tensions in contemporary society, and how blues-marketed artefacts are demarcated and declassified within the music industry.

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Finally, I thank all of the participants and interviewees who kindly took part in this research and who provided their own unique interpretations of the blues through various means.

# **Introduction**

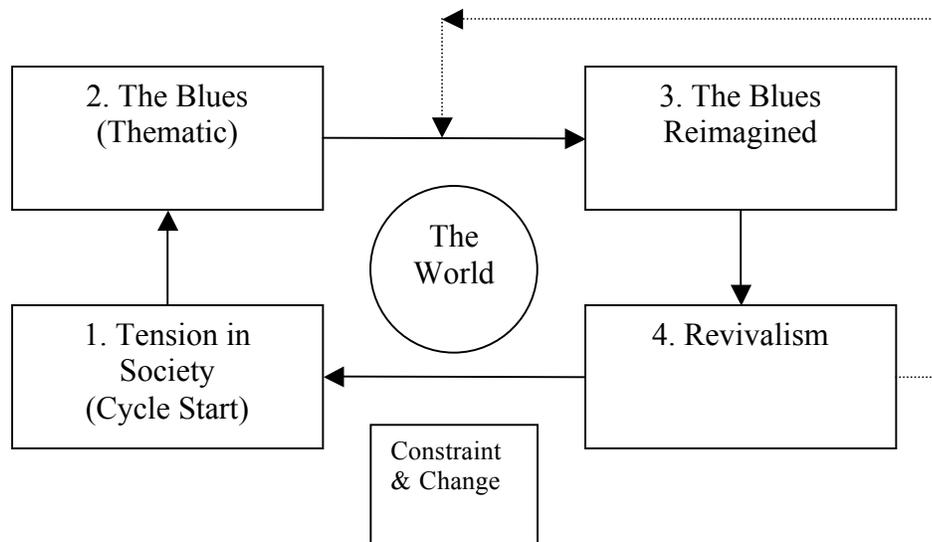
## **Aims and Objectives**

The primary aim of this thesis is to reveal and explore the sociocultural and musicological concepts and relationships that contribute to a contemporary understanding of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In doing so I aim to provide an account of the cultural value, resonances, and development of the blues genre in popular music culture in order to look critically and challenge stereotypes associated with blues music, and establish what the blues means, how it means, and to who it is meaningful. To permit the investigation of the extent of links between the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its cultural past, it is necessary to: define sociological and musicological factors contributing to the production, dissemination, and consumption of the blues; evaluate notions of blues authenticity and the relationships of such with cultural identity; and conceptualise the impact of schizophonic practices and explicit expressions of hybridity in popular music artefacts. The identification of aims, objectives, and the main research question in this thesis is motivated by the initial hypothesis that a contemporary blues music revival is actively taking place and is empirically detected in an increase in popular music artefacts that promote blues aesthetics and which are distributed via mainstream media channels. This project addresses the how and why this may be perceived to be the case and therefore also demands an exploration of: the links between the blues and the music industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; the constitution of a music revival and revivalist practices; and the sociomusicological connections between artefacts of the past and present. Through an inductive approach to the collection and analysis of data, I argue that popular music performers are continually reimagining the blues through engagement with the traditions of the past and call for an extension to the boundaries of blues music in its stylistic and cultural categorisation in 21<sup>st</sup>-century discourse.

## Contribution

There has been no previous singular study of popular music or the blues that has specifically addressed the sociocultural *and* musicological links between the traditions of the past in the context of 21<sup>st</sup>-century popular music in sufficient depth. Whilst a number of scholars including Elijah Wald (2004), Marybeth Hamilton (2009), Karl-Hagstrom Miller (2010), Ulrich Adelt (2010), and Peter Muir (2010) have offered revised interpretations of the way in which the blues has been conceptualised in the past, such studies are found to be limited in scope to the figures and artefacts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 1960s and consequently are more concerned with demystifying the origins and development of the blues in this period than the performances and recordings of popular musicians in the age of the Internet and the digital world. Despite this, parallels can be drawn with contemporary studies and edited collections in ethnomusicology (Post, 2018; Hilder, Stobart & Tan, 2017; Pettan & Titon, 2015), hip-hop (Rollefson, 2017; Forman & Neal, 2012; Rose, 2008) and Afrofuturism (Steinskog, 2018; Anderson & Jones, 2016; Gilroy, 2010) that demonstrate a concern with the issues of, and interconnections between, cultural identity, a sense of place and spatial dislocation, technology, and music revivalism, and such studies are accordingly cited throughout this thesis.

The original contribution of a conceptual framework for identifying and exploring blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is offered here as a unique methodological tool that mobilises, refines, and combines recently emerging concepts including those concerned with technological mediation, intertextuality, cultural identity, memory, and meaning. In filling this gap in the literature, I also offer a fresh historical review of the context in which the blues has developed and draw on scholarship in various fields outside of popular music, including media and communication, cultural studies, and psychology. Such revision is deemed necessary in order to uncover and explore problematic relationships that exist in and between concepts of race, place, and technology as linked to blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and do so at length in the opening chapters of this thesis. The complexity of the framework is illustrated in figure 1 in a simplified theoretical model that is offered as a summarisation of what I refer to as the cycle of blues reimagination and revival.



*Figure 1: The Cycle of Blues Reimagination and Revival*

The model is comprised of four stages in which the traditions associated with the blues are reimagined and constrained over a largely indeterminate period of time (although it is suggested each cycle approximately represents a span of 30 years as the next generation emerge). Central to this cycle is the world in which we live and this is illustrated here to indicate both that each component of the model is socially constructed, and that as the earth spins and the world develops, the effects of each component in each cycle reflects these changes. It should be made clear that the distance between each stage as illustrated, is not in anyway proportionate to the chronological distance in which these stages are experienced. At stage one there is a realisation of tension in society concerned with notions of difference and cultural identity which gives rise to themes and narratives closely linked to the past, perhaps most notably in the legacy of slavery, in stage two. These themes may have a direct relationship to everyday experience in for example racial discrimination or they may be experienced through the mediated channels of mass media including those of course that disseminate popular music artefacts. At stage three the themes and traditions are reimagined by musicians and producers in a multiplex of

sociocultural and musicological elements that are combined and developed with each generational cycle and which may be additionally influenced or constrained by the ideologies of a previous generation who have emotional attachment to music experienced in the course of their cycle (indicated by the broken arrow with anticlockwise motion but which should be interpreted as having a bearing at the same time in which the blues is reimagined and not travelling back in time). Stage three includes entire processes of music production, dissemination, and consumption and the majority of the concepts concerned with aspects including time, technology, and geographical location explored in this thesis constitute this stage. As each generation approaches stage four, notions of value and feelings of nostalgia may be a significant influence on the way in which music is produced and/or consumed, and the nature of these aesthetic beliefs and the way in which they are articulated changes in the course of the development of the world. Whilst this model is limited in that it generalises the relationships between each generation and the predilections of such groups in a linear fashion, it is largely representative of the narrative presented in this thesis and is congruent with the emerging argument that racial tension, particularly in the US, is reflected in the cross-cultural engagement with the blues, and is therefore important to a cultural understanding of the world in which we live and how we may make sense of it. I shall now provide an overview of some of the key terminology used in the thesis and give an outline of each chapter.

## **A Note about Terminology**

Throughout this thesis reference is made to ‘blues-marketed music’ and I should clarify that when this term, or in fact ‘blues-labelled music’, is utilised I am referring specifically to music that is commercially marketed with a ‘blues’ label as a stylistic category. Music singles, albums and other artefacts that are consumed by the public may also therefore, appear in specific sales charts such as the US Billboard Blues Album chart or feature a ‘blues’ category tag on compendia such as AllMusic.com. This is an important distinction as reference is made throughout this thesis to both: musicians who are clearly inspired by and who draw upon the traditions of the past but who may not be marketed as blues; and musicians who are clearly considered as blues musicians in the manner in

which they are marketed to the record-buying public. To give an example, Buddy Guy and Joe Bonamassa produce recordings that are sold with a blues label and their works are similarly categorised in compendia and appear in blues sales charts. The recordings of Royal Blood and Beyoncé on the other hand are not marketed as blues but yet all four of these acts may be perceived to be reimagining the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to varying degrees, for different purposes and to contrasting consumer groups. The issue of music categorisation and the problematic dimensions of such processes are discussed specifically in chapter three and in chapter seven.

It should be pointed out that in the context of this work the term ‘reimagining the blues’ refers to the reinterpretation of the traditions of the past closely associated with the blues in an imaginative manner or, to put it another way, how both music producers and listeners conceptualise the blues and how the creative processes in the mind impact on process of music production, music classification and a general understanding of what constitutes a specific music genre or style. Such creative processes may be evident in music recordings through everyday listening or analytical processes, or simply in an individual’s spoken or written characterisation of the blues. A broad range of ways in which the blues is reimagined by different individuals and groups of people is explored in this thesis. Whilst other frequently used terms such as ‘authenticity’ and ‘revivalism’ are introduced and explained in detail in the conceptual framework (see pp. 51-54, 65-67), particular blues music revivals that are cited throughout the work will now be outlined.

In addition to the blues revival of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that forms the focus of this thesis and to which one might consider this work to contribute to, there are two preceding blues music revivals that I recognise, as stated in the blues typology (p. 155). The most significant and most frequently cited is the blues music revival that became most prominent in the 1960s as part of the US folk-music revival that had developed since the 1950s. It is in the 1960s that music marketed as blues became common and many musicians of the time such as B.B King, John Lee Hooker, and Mississippi John Hurt achieved increasing or renewed success performing for white middle-class audiences. It is also within this period that conceptions of the blues impacted on how musicians and their adoption of

electric instrumentation were thought of and treated in folk-music circles, leading to the restrictive demarcation of the blues as a category and which coincided with developments that led to what are widely thought of as the Chicago blues and British blues styles. The key debates and issues in scholarship at the time of what I refer to as the first blues music revival shed much light on the context in which the revival took place and are brought to the fore in work by Baraka (1995), Keil (1991), and retrospective writing by Adelt (2010), Wald (2004; 2010) and Schroeder (2004), as discussed in the contextual and historical framework (pp. 16-24). This thesis makes frequent reference to the 1960s period for example, in the discussion of cultural identity and the Black Power movement in chapter two and the development of instrumentation and associated legacies in chapter four, and such work plays a valuable role in further contextualising and historicising the first blues music revival.

A second blues music revival is recognised as taking place in the 1980s and 1990s and although arguably less significant than the first revival in terms of the social-historical context in which it took place, is deemed to hold a significant bearing on how the blues is conceptualised by not only those who grew up in such a period but those music consumers born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the legacy of blues-marketed performers such as Robert Cray, Eric Clapton, and Stevie Ray Vaughan and their respective recordings. As discussed in chapter four, this revival coincided with the emergence of the CD format which led to record companies rereleasing blues-labelled recordings of the past and marketing such recordings as authentic, as performers such as the aforementioned achieved relatively high record sales at the time. In both revivals the recordings of Robert Johnson originally made in the 1930s were reissued, in 1961 as *King of the Delta Blues Singers* in the vinyl format, and in 1990 as *The Complete Recordings* in the CD format, and as Johnson's recordings were revived so were the mythical stories that characterise his biography. As this thesis shows, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Robert Johnson's legacy remains intact as he is lauded as a signifier of authenticity and exemplifies the bluesman character that largely defines blues music in the minds of many listeners.

## Chapter Outline

In chapter one, the methodology is presented with an opening discussion of the fields of ethnomusicology and musicology. The key conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin the project, including those pertaining to notions of authenticity, cultural identity, intertextuality, and music revivalism, are also provided here. An explanation of the main methods of data collection and analysis follows with an account of ethical considerations, preliminary studies undertaken, and the limitations and scope of the project.

In chapter two, the intersection of racial politics and popular music is explored through a contextualisation of blues as a genre within a broad societal context. This includes an investigation of the historical experience of African Americans and demonstrates how cultural power is bound to the concept of race through associations with colonial imperialism and primitivism. I suggest how internal and external factors may impact on the experience of African Americans in the US, and illuminate the relationship of such factors to key concepts of cultural memory, diaspora, and the legacy of slavery in a network of connections that contribute to the formulation of black identity in the past and present. In contextualising the blues in its emergence and ‘invention’ within these networks and mobilising the cultural theories proposed by Stuart Hall (1990; 1992; 1996), Paul Gilroy (1993; 2002), and Ronald Radano (2013) with the music criticism of African-American writers including Amiri Baraka (Baraka, 1995; Jones, 2010) I argue that the fluidity of black cultural identity contrasts with and is constrained by the cultural identity articulated in blues historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, it is argued that contemporary interpretations of blues as both a genre and music style have been constrained by ideological forces, whilst processual flows of globalisation contrarily enable a reimagining of the blues.

The contribution a sense of place makes to how the blues is interpreted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is presented in chapter three through a survey of the findings and debates in musicology concerned with the stylistic origins of the formal structures in blues-marketed music, and the consistency with which blues-marketed music is categorised in blues compendia in print and digital formats. Work in the field of musicology by Peter Van der Merwe (1992) and Gerhard Kubik (1999) is particularly useful in cross-referencing Anglo-

American traditions with those of African music in the context of blues music historiography, and as one of the longest running open access music databases of its kind AllMusic.com is explored so that the relationship between a sense of place and music artefacts can be elucidated. In addition to the connections between origin, displacement, and perceptions of authenticity as they relate to geographical location, contemporary social movements are also pinpointed in order to illustrate the relationships between the thematic resonances of blues in certain locales from a historical perspective. In revealing these relationships the emergent argument is that a more fluid definition of blues music is required in order to express the cultural diversity of its participants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In chapter four, I propose a blues music typology and demonstrate the extent to which technology has played a role in how blues music has developed from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the impact this influence has had on a contemporary understanding of blues-marketed music. The underpinning argument here points to the continued primacy of technology in how the blues is continually reimagined as a result of decision-making that relates to instrumentation, sound manipulation, listening formats, and distribution. In sharing the concerns of Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen (2010) in unearthing how technological mediation impacts on the aesthetics of recorded popular music, I refine her model of mediating process in music production as a conceptual base in the context of the work and demonstrate how notions of blues authenticity are manifested in emergent forms of technology and the discourse surrounding such. These themes are pursued in the following chapter, in which the album *De Stijl* by the group The White Stripes is examined using Alan Moore's (2002) tripartite classification of authenticity, as debates surrounding the relevancy of such notions are explored in demonstration of how musicians navigate authenticity in the production of audio artefacts and why there is a perceived need to address such in the creative decision-making of popular music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I make use of a variety of data sources including consumer and professional reviews of such artefacts with the aim of exploring how listeners perceive authenticity in a contemporary context and the reasons listeners may have for finding music authentic.

The questions investigated in chapter six, including those concerning both how a contemporary popular music artefact conveys meaning and how narratives of the blues are manifested in contemporary US society, are done so through a number of steps and processes that combine multiple analytical methods including those linked to concepts of semiotics and intertextuality, with music-theoretic analyses within an ecological approach to the perception of music meaning, as defined by Eric F. Clarke (2005). Through the adoption of such methods in the analysis of the song *Cleveland*, I assert how the group Algiers are mining a cultural past in the reimagination of the blues as a form of cultural expression that directly reflects the tension in contemporary US society.

The focal point in chapter seven is the response provided by participants in a listening survey and completed in the form of a questionnaire that includes the requirement for individual interpretations of an audio artefact (from a total of five objects) in terms of stylistic reference and meaning. The overall aim here is to analyse how the blues is interpreted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and identify factors that may impact on an interpretation of the blues using predominately ethnographic methods. The results of the listening survey are correlated with data derived from an analysis of both the formal music features and sociocultural links that exist in each of the five artefacts using methods of analysis that include aspects of the transphonographic framework as developed by Serge Lacasse (2018). The results are discussed throughout the chapter in relation to music industry practices and recorded music sales figures, in addition to the theories of mass culture and concepts including prosthetic memory, as defined by Alison Landsberg (2004). As a result, I further demonstrate how the blues may be reimagined in a broader range of audio artefacts pertaining to different stylistic and commercial categories within the music industry by contemporary popular music producers. It is also claimed that young listeners of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are declassifying the blues in their engagement with popular music objects and communication technologies, as preconceptions of blues music are found to have prevented participants from achieving a greater degree of fulfilment of what Richard Middleton (1990) describes as a ‘full competence’ interpretation (Middleton, 1990, p. 174).

Finally, the components of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century music revival are identified and studied in order to reveal how and why a perceived blues revival might be taking place by addressing the concept of revivalism and influential factors such as emotion and feelings of nostalgia that may impact on associated practices. I draw on a number of theories and concepts in exploration of these themes, including the theoretical model of music revivalism as developed by Tamara E. Livingston (2014; 1999, p. 69), the mechanisms of emotion induction presented by Eric Clarke, Nicola Dibben, and Stephanie Pitts (2010, pp. 83-86), and Thomas Turino's (2014; 1999) conceptualisation of the connections between signs in music and emotional experience. The chapter includes a synthesis of qualitative data drawn from interviews with curators of blues music through descriptive coding that enables an elaboration of how the boundaries of blues music as a style are demarcated in online discourse of blues-based artefacts, and the manner in which the ideology of authenticity associated with the blues recordings of the past is revived, including the way in which it may be manifested in a competitive environment. Subsequently, I argue that the continual reimagining of the blues is emblematic of racial tension in society, reflecting how the world is constructed but potentially underused as a vehicle for racial progress.

## Contextual & Historical Framework

This inductive review of the literature deemed relevant to the aims of the study illustrates the main contextual and historical issues and challenges that have emerged in academic debates of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in order to uncover the main themes that form the basis for further exploration in this thesis. Key theories and concepts pertaining to the methodological framework are discussed later in chapter one. Through a review of literature, this section addresses a number of generally *non-exclusive* and interconnected areas that are explored throughout the thesis including those that may contribute to an understanding of aspects such as cultural identity, music composition, performance, repertoire, and consumption. As will be seen, a number of debates, including those concerned with cultural identity, continue over a number of decades, whilst others may be confined to a span of one or two years. Therefore, it is more or less impossible to arrange thematic material in a completely linear chronological manner, particularly given the often interdisciplinary approach taken by ethnomusicologists and contemporary musicologists in studies of blues music and related forms and the concurrent developments in blues music style and blues music culture since the epoch of the genre.

First published in 1963 under the name of LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* by Amiri Baraka (1995) is a sociopolitical commentary on the experience of African Americans living in the United States from the slave era to the latter period of the Civil Rights movement, a time in which black Americans were noted to become ‘citizens’. Within the work, Baraka points to the centrality of music to the black experience in America and focuses on black music styles and the relationship of such to ‘blues people’. Baraka makes a number of arguments that continue to persist in discourse concerning blues music that could be considered as ethnocentric, including his view on white appropriations of the blues:

The materials of blues were not available to the white American, even though some strange circumstance might prompt him to look for them. It was as if these materials were secret and obscure, and blues a kind of ethno-historic rite as basic as blood (Baraka, 1995, p. 148).

The inaccessibility of what Baraka views as authentic blues music to white people is grounded in an experiential access argument that states you must be black and live in America and as such, the natural inclinations of blues performance can not be learnt (Baraka, 1995, p. 82). This view is contested most notably by Joel Rudinow (1994) in a paper titled *Race, Ethnicity, Expressive Authenticity: Can White People Sing the Blues?* Rudinow contests Baraka's view on the misappropriation of blues by white musicians and the notion of 'ethno-historic rite' by suggesting that the contemporary African-American community have as much experience of slavery, as endured by those in the slavery period, as white musicians, and that it would be equally superficial for 'a Jewish American baby boomer (such as myself) to take the position that only Jews can adequately comprehend the experience of the holocaust [*sic*]' (Rudinow, 1994, p. 133). Whilst Baraka acknowledges the process of reimagining music from the past in the present through use of the term appropriation, with the jazz saxophonist Sonny Rollins receiving praise for his 'own highly original appropriation' of the free jazz approach pioneered by Ornette Coleman (Baraka, 1995, p. 228), he reserves the term misappropriation specifically for white engagement in black culture. Baraka's views on stylistic hybridity and mainstream culture are also highlighted in his personal assessments of examples drawn from what he calls the 'blues continuum'. He points to the period around the 1920s in which classic female blues singers brought the blues so closely into the white mainstream that the blues almost died through the immense popularity of recordings made at the time, adding further that despite this, the blues *remains* 'obscure to the mainstream of American culture' (Baraka, 1995, p. 148). In his verdict on third-stream, Baraka is also horrified by what he suggests might be 'the *final* dilution of Afro-American musical tradition' (Baraka, 1995, p. 229, italics in original). As blues-marketed music has undergone several commercial revivals since this commentary was published (pp. 5-6), and largely enabled through technological developments in listening formats, it seems fair to suggest that what Baraka feared, has come to pass especially with the increasing cultural hybridity of music styles prevalent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, Baraka's principal argument is upheld by many scholars including Paul C. Taylor (1995) who criticised Rudinow's defence of the thesis that white blues need not be disqualified as inauthentic, suggesting that the experiential access argument may be contested on the

grounds that ‘the blues is about what the contemporary and historical experiences of being African American have in common - the experience of being...a member of an oppressed and downwardly constituted social category, subject to racialized hostile misfortune’ (Taylor, 1995, pp. 314-315). In a response to Taylor, Rudinow (1995) rejects the assumption of a ‘particular racialized exclusivist delimitation of “the (true) blues community”’, one that excludes all “other downwardly constituted social groupings” asserting that as an evolving racial project, the question of the authenticity of white blues remains open, pending further argument and that integrity and mastery of the blues music idiom should be the yardstick by which blues performances are judged (Rudinow, 1995, p. 317). Rudinow states that Taylor’s view of black blues authenticity, from the perspective of the listener and their experiences, also implies that an audience is incapable of appreciating certain performances on account of a performer’s race, and further that a listener must verify the racial identity of a performer as a precondition of the aesthetic experience of blues music appreciation (Rudinow, 1995, pp. 316-317). Whilst it is clear that not everyone will share the same store of sociocultural signs and norms, enabling a multitude of aesthetic experiences of the same performance depending on perceptual relativity, and that racism persists in the US in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, authenticity is *applied to* cultural artefacts by listeners and is not inherent in sound recordings and performances. Therefore, notions of black blues authenticity as asserted by Baraka in *Blues People* may be viewed as politically motivated. As one of the first books on jazz music authored by an African American looking out from within black culture rather than as a white scholar looking in from the outside, and the period in which it was composed, it is perhaps understandable that, as African-American author Ralph Ellison noted, Baraka ‘is straining for a note of militancy’ (Ellison, Bellow & Callahan, 2003, p. 279). It is also interesting that the main musical examples in *Blues People* appear to justify the concept of the blues continuum as they are actually representative of jazz styles such as swing, bebop, and hard bop, and not solely of, in Baraka’s words, ‘primitive blues’ as in the majority of publications concerned with blues music. In his chapter titled ‘The Modern Scene’ jazz is the primary focus and there is no analysis of the relationships between contemporary blues people and the electric blues musicians such as B.B. King or Howlin’ Wolf who were starting to attract white listeners at the time.

The contemporary roots of the phenomena known as Afrofuturism can be traced to the North American Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and in the work of literary figures, modern jazz musicians, and pioneers of hip-hop including Octavia E. Butler and Samuel R. Delany, Sun Ra and John Coltrane, and DJ Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa respectively. The term Afrofuturism was later coined by the author and cultural critic Mark Dery in 1993 and published in an article titled *Back to the Future* (Dery, 1994). Dery defined Afrofuturism as:

Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture - and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future - might, for want of a better term, be called "Afrofuturism" (Dery, 1994, p. 180).

A key theme in Afrofuturist practice therefore, is the intersection of race and technology whilst the representation of history in the West is also noted to be a concern as Afrofuturists contend the objectification of blackness in traditional historical accounts (DeJuliis & Lohr, 2016). In *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness*, communication and black studies scholars Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones (2016) state that 21<sup>st</sup>-century Afrofuturism is characterised by five dimensions including metaphysics, aesthetics, theoretical and applied sciences, social sciences, and programmatic spaces (Anderson & Jones, 2016, p. x). A contemporary definition of Afrofuturism is described in the same book as '2.0' as it coincides with the evolution of the World Wide Web from a static read-only platform enabling the search for content described as '1.0', and most appropriate to a 20<sup>th</sup> century context, to a social media driven environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In their definition of Astro-Blackness, as a concept of Afrofuturism, Anderson and Jones emphasise 'technogenesis' as the 'idea that humans and technics have co-evolved together' and state that 'Astro-Blackness represents the emergence of a black identity framework within emerging global technocultural assemblages, migration, human reproduction, algorithms, digital networks, software platforms, bio-technical augmentation and are constitutive of racialized identities that are

increasingly materialized' (Anderson & Jones, 2016, pp. vii-viii). The notion of the technogenesis of black identity and its reflection of counter histories through post-human possibilities, enhancement, and augmentation is a notable consideration in a project in which the history of a music genre, namely the blues, closely tied to a black identity and a contemporary understanding of such forms the focus of scholarly enquiry. In the context of this thesis therefore, Afrofuturistic practices may incorporate what is perceived as a reimagining of the blues.

In *Afrofuturism and Black Sound Studies: Culture, Technology, and Things to Come* (Steinskog, 2018), musicologist Erik Steinskog focuses on the sonic aspects of Afrofuturism using the terms 'Afrofuturist sound' and/or 'Afrosonics' but makes it clear in his introduction that some black musicians distance themselves from the term Afrofuturism and that not every music video featuring a spaceship should be considered as Afrofuturist (Steinskog, 2018, p. 2). Steinskog also illustrates how different musical genres may make experimental or futurist dimensions hard to detect by providing the example of Stevie Wonder, who is noted as an important proponent of the synthesiser but is not mentioned in Afrofuturist discourse, whereas proponents operating in or under experimental genres such as Herbie Hancock and Bernie Worrell are often cited (Steinskog, 2018, p. 194). Despite these challenges, Steinskog states that most genres of popular music since the 1950s may be found within Afrofuturism as the canon moves across genres and styles (Steinskog, 2018, p. 28). In Steinskog's work, Afrofuturism is conceptualised as having historical layers across a timeline that spans from ancient Egypt to a future outer space. Through 'sonic time travel where the sounds of the past re-emerge in the present together with the sounds of the (imagined) future' (Steinskog, 2018, pp. 6, 132), the key question originally posed by musicologist George E. Lewis (2008) which is 'what can *the sound* tell us about the Afrofuture?' (Lewis, 2008, p. 141, italics in original) is addressed. Whilst the use of audio samples and sampling processes often provide a sense of sonic time travel, Steinskog's primary focus in terms of instrumentation, and similarly to earlier Afrofuturist work (Dery, 1994), is on the guitar and keyboard-based instruments. The new use of old instruments is, in addition to the

invention of new instruments, and as jazz musician and scholar Salim Washington (2008) had previously argued, key to ‘the Afro-technological’ (Steinskog, 2018, p. 182).

Afrofuturistic thinking can be perceived to sit in opposition to the narrative that accompanies the conceptualisation of the blues in ethnomusicologist David Evans’s (1982) seminal work *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues*. In this work, Evans both demarcates blues music from mass culture through an analysis of folk blues tradition and composition, but also raises the importance of mass media in the distribution of artefacts of folklore and the standardisation of elements perceived ‘to eliminate some of the variation that is normal in a purely oral tradition’ (Evans, 1982, p. 2). Indeed this is how Evans distinguishes folk blues from other styles of blues, in that it is transmitted orally and performed in small folk groups, and ‘generally found in the southern countryside and small towns’ (Evans, 1982, pp. 3-5). By focusing on a tradition in a specific locale, that is in Drew, Mississippi, attention is drawn to the significance of place, particularly as Evans maintains that only through folkloristic fieldwork can the necessary comparative data be obtained. Furthermore, the folk group under examination are a small group of lower-class, middle-aged or older, male, black Americans of southern origin, who perform with guitar accompaniment and who are not religious. This description of musicians in the study perhaps defines what has come to be the stereotypical blues performer most precisely, the ‘authentic’ bluesman of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is apparent that a number of preconceptions of the folk blues performer emerge in the methodological approach undertaken. Folk revival artists are excluded from the study as they may have been ‘interviewed too many times’ and are then likely to give misleading answers as such experiences ‘can color their answers and attitudes’. Additionally, regular performances in front of audiences not reflective of one’s own folk group ‘can affect their repertoires and styles’ (Evans, 1982, p. 13). Versions of *Big Road Blues* recorded by rock and white folk music revival performers are also not included in the work as they represent different traditions and social groups, and according to Evans, young black Americans prefer other popular music styles and do not engage with the oral tradition under examination (Evans, 1982, pp. 2, 309). Whilst highlighting the significance of technology and the impact of listening formats on

perceptions of local tradition and the development of blues repertoire in addition to the impact such technology had on his own interest in blues music (Evans, 1982, p. 9), the criteria for authentic blues is largely based on its 'opposition' to mass culture and the cultural mainstream. In Evans's study, the blues is an unpopular and non-commercial folk form performed by a small, rural, black community in Mississippi for members of the local community. Authentic blues is representative of the past whereas 'composers of popular music attempt to be up-to-date and progressive and to improve upon previous offerings' but also 'tend to be creative and innovative to a much greater extent' (Evans, 1982, pp. 6-7). Despite such notions of primitivism, *Big Road Blues* is a valuable and influential study on the processes of composition from the perspective of a performer, the effects of commercial recordings on tradition, and how musical features may be reimagined by individual performers in different locales.

In 1988 Nelson George published the provocatively titled *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (George, 2003) as the antithesis of the narrative which presented the blues from the late 1960s to the late 1970s as an evolving form. Drawing on journalistic interviews and insights into music industry practices over the course of a decade from 1978, the African-American author highlights socio-economic factors that exist within the expressions of a black community and how cross-cultural mainstream appeal in the music industry effectively ended that which brought what George refers to as the rhythm and blues world into formation. George defines rhythm and blues in two ways: the first is as a musical synthesis of gospel, big band swing, and blues which is propelled by the use of electric bass; and the second is as a black community bonded through common political, economic, and geographic conditions (George, 2003, p. x). Drawing on Baraka's *Blues People* and congruently with the stated author's main argument, George is primarily concerned with the dilution of a black cultural identity in the name of capitalism. George condemns what he sees as cultural sacrifices, as black individuals in the 1980s are 'transformed' in pursuit of 'an anglicised self-image', declaring such to be 'one of the disturbing triumphs of assimilation', concluding that the challenge for black musicians, producers, and radio programmers is 'to free themselves from the comforts of crossover, to recapture their racial identity, and to fight for the right to exist on their own terms'

(George, 2003, pp. xii, 200). The integrality of rhythm and blues music to the black community and George's perception of its dilution in the commercial mainstream aligns music of the blues continuum specifically with an understanding of popular culture that defines such music as representative of a folk culture as opposed to a mass-market culture. In an earlier landmark study titled *Urban Blues* and originally published in 1966 Charles Keil (1991) argued that the commodification of the blues actually intensified the folk culture as opposed to destroying it:

The strands of a folk tradition have been brought together; the music of a people has been unified, energized, amplified, and disseminated with an efficiency that seems fantastic. The bluesman and the businessman share the same objective - they want to reach people. And they do (Keil, 1991, p. 95).

Keil views the commodification of blues music as a natural development in what he describes as being part of a folk-urban continuum and suggests that even the likely possibility of some degree of exploitation would not deter blues musicians from the lure of having their 'stories' heard by hundreds and thousands of people in commodified forms, as 'many bluesmen would pay for the privilege' (Keil, 1991, pp. 52, 95). George himself recognises the key role radio has played in shaping the aesthetic tastes of the black community as it has 'historically been so intimately connected with the consciousness of blacks', but George emphasises that this is *black* radio and such aesthetic shaping occurs with the proviso that it 'remembers its black audience', something George states it frequently fails to do (George, 2003, p. xiii). Similarly to George, Keil finds Baraka's definition of blues culture influential and attempts to approach the blues as a black scholar looking outwards. However, in the afterword to *Urban Blues* Keil reveals he is white, and the identity politics of the period is perhaps evident in the declaration that his motive for scholarly engagement in black culture from 1960 'was simply to play a clear and strong part in righting the wrongs of American racism by celebrating black alternatives to the "great white way"' (Keil, 1991, p. 226). Through focusing on the then contemporary blues scene, Keil does provide an alternative to the blues scholarship by the likes of Samuel Charters (1975) and Paul Oliver (1990),

originally publishing their work in 1959 and 1960 respectively, who ‘manifest the “moldy-fig mentality”’ in their search for authentic blues performers who had to be obscure, old, based in or from a rural location, had learned or performed with a legendary figure, and should have held menial jobs for the majority of their lives with as little contamination of urban influences as possible (Keil, 1991, pp. 34-35). Additionally, in a taxonomy of blues styles (Keil, 1991, p. 221), Keil also acknowledges ‘white blues’ and the folk revival acts that Evans (1982) excludes in his study, comprising what Keil calls ‘phony folk blues’ (for resonances with indigeneity and authenticity, see chapter one, pp. 41-43, 51-54). Although the terms appropriation and imitation abound in descriptions of such styles throughout Keil’s book, his recognition of such suggests that they are no less experienced as ‘real’ than what may be called country blues or Chicago blues styles, despite labels such as ‘phony folk blues’ that Keil uses to dismantle primarily white constructions of folk authenticity. Although George and Keil come to different conclusions with regards to the perceived commercialisation of music in the blues continuum both are concerned with a black cultural identity and acknowledge ‘the struggle for cultural pluralism’ (Keil, 1991, p. 3), as many black citizens look for integration into an American society that, according to George, only exists ideologically (George, 2003, p. 199).

The dilution of a black cultural identity in the wheels of capitalism remains a key concern for black listeners and scholars discussing popular music forms such as hip-hop in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Forman, 2002; Judy, 2012; McLeod, 2012; Rose, 1994; 2008). As Murray Forman (2002) explains in his analysis of the impact of ‘novelty’ performers such as Vanilla Ice and MC Hammer on the rap scene in the early 1990s, the commercial success achieved by such acts only ‘further heightened the perception within the rap scene that there existed a “real” or “authentic” hip-hop culture that was vulnerable to erosion by the “inauthentic” influences of exploitative capitalism’, within a time period in which ‘staying hardcore’ and ‘keeping it real’ emerged as responses to this commercialisation and perceived dilution of cultural values (Forman, 2002, pp. 216, 218). In *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Perry, 2004), African-American scholar Imani Perry states that despite the resonance of hip-hop with marginalised individuals of

various nationalities and ethnicities hip-hop remains ‘overwhelmingly and fundamentally black American-and expressive of that experience’ (Perry, 2004, p. 2). Perry also articulates the tension perceived to exist in the mainstream crossover of black cultural forms, echoing earlier scholarship by Tricia Rose (1994) and Nelson George (2003):

‘Part of the seduction of rap for mainstream America, particularly white young people, lies in its iconoclasm in relation to white American cultural norms. It is Other, it is hard, and it is deviant. On the other hand, black listeners of hip hop, in a gesture revealing an anxiety about the increased commercialism of rap and a strong identification with the art form as their own, demand that hip hop music be “Real” and remain true to the experiences of black America’ (Perry, 2004, p. 136).

As illustrated in this contextual framework, these concerns have characterised the development of the blues and, as I argue in chapter two, led to its demarcation, as such challenges continue to shape perceptions of the blues and subsequent popular forms such as hip-hop in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (notions of authenticity and commercialism are discussed further in the conceptual and theoretical framework in chapter one). Contrastingly, and in addition to Forman’s (2002) distinction between hip-hop and previous popular forms (p. 35), Perry (2004) suggests there are far fewer depictions of idealised romantic love or painful love in hip-hop than in any other black music form and that there are more explicit expressions of rage, more intimate expressions of psychological pain, and a preponderance of detailed portrayals of a criminal underworld and interpersonal conflicts in hip-hop (Perry, 2004, p. 8). Such a characterisation is, of course, a generalisation and there are many recordings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century considered and/or labelled as blues that may depict any aspect outlined above (such as *Crazy Blues*, see chapter seven, pp. 253-254). However scholarship on 20<sup>th</sup> century blues performances (Evans, 2007; Taft, 2013) has illustrated the dominance of love as a lyrical theme in analyses of recordings at various times and so this distinction can be seen as useful, if only from a historical perspective.

Conceptions of race and cultural identity continue to characterise the concerns expressed in contemporary scholarship on the blues, as Ulrich Adelt's *Blues Music in the Sixties: A Story in Black and White* (Adelt, 2010) exemplifies. Adelt's main argument is that essentialist conceptions of race were cemented in discourse on popular music between 1955 and 1975 as a result of such notions remaining unchallenged. Adelt highlights the period between 1967 and 1971 as the point at which major ideological shifts occurred, as the British group Cream stretched the perceived boundaries of blues through: embracement of technology that included guitar fuzz-boxes and the wah-wah pedal; extended improvisations in live performances; and the incorporation of psychedelic lyrics and album art on their sophomore 1967 release *Disraeli Gears*. B.B. King's 1968 performance at the Fillmore West is also pinpointed as King recounts how his audience switched from being '90 per cent black to 95 per cent white' and gratefully received three or four standing ovations (Adelt, 2010, pp. 69-70, 18). The four year period also includes the founding of *Living Blues* magazine in 1970 by Jim O'Neal, Amy van Singel, Paul Garon, Bruce Iglauer, Diane Allmen, Andre Souffront, and Tim Zornand. Adelt shines a spotlight on the editorial policy of the longest running blues publication in the US arguing that 'Living Blues made an attempt to resegment the blues in response to the significant changes of the 1960s that had led to the racially impure and commercialized music like the late 1960s work of B.B. King, Janis Joplin, and Eric Clapton' (Adelt, 2010, p. 11). Adelt rightly points to the arbitrariness of the distinction made by Bruce Iglauer between white blues as being derivative and learnt from records, whilst black blues can not be learnt as it comes from the folk tradition, stating that the perception of white and black sounds is as capricious as racial classifications and black blues musicians were refining their repertoire and performances by listening to recordings from the 1930s (Adelt, 2010, p. 129). Paul Garon (1973) felt compelled to defend the editorial position following a backlash against the racial policy:

LIVING BLUES does not accept an acoustic definition of the blues. We feel that the blues is a black American working-class music that developed in response to numerous determinants; that these determining factors were in a real sense specific to the black working-class is borne out by the fact that it was they, and they alone, who produced the blues....Deprived of its historical base by the white performers, the blues, as purveyed by whites, is no longer the blues, and thus is not the concern of LIVING BLUES (Garon, 1973, p. 4).

This distinction has been highlighted and critiqued previously by Peter Narváez (1993) who additionally noted how technical ‘how to play blues’ articles were largely avoided as it would ‘lead to an understanding of blues as performance rather than black culture’ and pointed to inconsistency in how a middle-class musician such as Robert Cray, who listened to Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton before hearing any ‘folk blues’, could be featured in the bimonthly publication solely on the fact that he is black (Narváez, 1993, pp. 248, 252-253). The 1960s are certainly a key point in the development of the blues, a period in which both black and white musicians were reimagining older styles to suit new environments, audiences, and aesthetic tastes. It is during this time that folklore scholars such as David Evans were largely defining the blues through their fieldwork and Evans (2011) finds fault with a number of statements of fact made by Adelt in his retrospective on the period that cast such folklorists in a potentially bad light. Contrary to claims that blues musicians such as Skip James and Son House never got the chance to speak up (Adelt, 2010, p. 47), Evans states such musicians were interviewed at length in magazines and books and so had more than adequate chance to speak out (Evans, 2011, p. 271). However, Adelt’s original point implies that such musicians were probably ill at ease to say exactly what they felt as they suddenly found themselves thrust into the spotlight performing in front of large white audiences and coveted as folk legends following their discovery by folklorists in the revivalism of the time. Adelt’s suggestion that black music consumers shifted from blues to soul in response to the increasing sense of black empowerment during the Civil Rights period is also criticised (Adelt, 2010, p. 15). Evans regards such a suggestion as a ‘myth’ and points to the omission of the hits many performers such as B.B. King, Bobby Bland, and Jimmy Reed had in the R&B chart

during the 1960s (Evans, 2011, p. 272). Certainly, newly categorised music styles such as soul and funk became increasingly popular at the time, and outside of Chicago performers such as Jimmy Reed have acknowledged that audiences were only partially comprised of black listeners (Wald, 2004, pp. 217-218). However, it is true that many black blues musicians such as Albert King and John Lee Hooker continued to have hits on the R&B chart in the 1960s and so there is validity in the arguments made by both Adelt and Evans. Evans's sensitivity to Adelt's use of the word 'racialization' in reference to blues as black music (Evans, 2011, p. 271) also illustrates how the identity politics of the past are manifest in the present. Adelt's research is, therefore, both intrinsically and extrinsically relevant in the way in which it brings attention to the cultural politics of performers and audiences in a critical period in the development of the blues and how it may draw critique from prominent folklorists of the time.

The racialisation of music is explored in detail in *Music, Difference and the Residue of Race* by sociomusicologist Jo Haynes (2013) who suggests that anxieties surrounding the aesthetics of cultural hybridisation are alleviated by the idea of race in 'reproducing essentialist notions of music and cultural identities' which as a consequence 'narrowly and unevenly defines affinities and taste' (Haynes, 2013, p. 145). Haynes points to the popularity and growth of what are broadly understood as black music forms such as garage, grime, and hip-hop by stating that despite their cross-cultural production, appeal and consumption, the cultural value of such remains determined through racially exclusive representations of national cultural formations or marginalised due to a perceived threat to social order and national unity (Haynes, 2013, p. 147). Therefore, the uncertainty and anxiety surrounding cultural hybridisation and potential ambivalence posed by Others, as distinguished from Self, is therefore removed through a "positive" embrace of difference' (Haynes, 2013, p. 151), and world music is highlighted as best illustrating this ongoing entanglement of race and music and the attraction to difference. Ethnomusicologist Fiorella Montero-Diaz (2018) provides a notable example in her exploration of the tensions and anxieties in the trajectory and public reception of the intercultural fusion group La Sarita in *Turning things around? From white fusion stars with Andean flavour to Andean fusion stars with white appeal* (Montero-Diaz, 2018).

The musical and social challenges in the formation and development of a group that includes rural Andean musicians and urban musicians from varying socio-economic backgrounds, are noted to impact on numerous aspects of the groups' work. These challenges include overcoming 'internalised stereotypes and prejudices to be able to see each other as equals', and finding a balance between the urban and the rural including the incorporation of traditional and non-traditional musical forms, in order to celebrate cultural diversity and social inclusion to the white upper-class audience in Lima (Montero-Diaz, 2018, pp. 434-435). Although La Sarita positively challenge racism and established stereotypes through embracement of the Other socially and musically, Montero-Diaz suggests that their fusion music does not transcend racialisation but rather 'allows difference to become audible' through processes of cultural hybridisation (Montero-Diaz, 2018, p. 436). Such celebrations of diversity may be witnessed in contemporary examples pertaining to the blues canon, as provided in this thesis (for example, chapter seven, pp. 250-262).

Haynes (2013) also points to the parallels between concepts of blackness/whiteness in relation to world music with the construction and maintenance of Orientalism (see historical development, chapter one, pp. 94-96). World music's location outside of Europe and the Anglo-American network is one indication of its distinctiveness from whiteness as taste and affinity reproduce race. Haynes states that white professionals continue to seek pure and authentic forms whilst minority consumers are sceptical of world music and the stereotypes that result from 'imaginary musical identification' or 'psychic tourism' (Haynes, 2013, pp. 72, 152, 153). The notion of the Other or an Otherness is often used to refer to cultural, ideological, geographical, and religious difference, and as discussed in chapter one of this thesis (pp. 42-44), the perception of something different from one's own, for example, the perception of Serbian rural singing by a Western European listener (Jovanović & Ranković, 2015) or the use of a raised fourth degree of the minor scale by a Western composer (Milin, 2015), also introduces connotations of the exotic. As stated in the aims and objectives of this thesis (p. 1), challenges include illustrating how the blues has been narrowly demarcated in the past and how blues music is conceptualised in the 21<sup>st</sup> century whilst challenging stereotypical views associated with race that stem from the past. Whilst this contextual framework

illustrates what we know about the blues and how it may be perceived, the demarcation of blues music is most notably explored in chapter two of this thesis (pp. 94-104).

The idea of imaginary musical identification is pursued by media and communications scholar Jack Hamilton in *Just Around Midnight: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination* (Hamilton, 2016). In his book, Hamilton aims to ‘disrupt the stories that we have told ourselves about what we’ve partitioned as “black music” and “white music” and to identify what we are actually talking about when we say these things’ (Hamilton, 2016, p. 25). Hamilton explores how perceptions of music as black or white, as in accordance with race-based theories of musical practice, predominately occur at the level of performance whilst the motivations behind such performances are often ignored, and shows how a ‘sonic worldview’ was imposed on performances in relation to ‘a set of imagined aesthetic structures’ during the rock and roll period:

... white musicians were celebrated for pursuing musical styles that were both associated with their race (such as the Beatles’ experimentations with European art music) and outside of it (such as white blues musicians playing the blues), while black musicians were decried as fraudulent for not adhering to standards imagined as properly “black” (Hamilton, 2016, p. 224).

As mentioned above, the effects of such processes of demarcation and the legacy of such in relation to the blues genre and how it may be perceived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century including the perpetuation of racial stereotypes is a key consideration in this thesis (notably in chapters two, seven, and eight) and indeed in the contextual framework presented here as I continue to demonstrate.

The folk-mass dichotomy in blues historiography is explored by Karl Hagstrom Miller in *Segregating Sound* (Miller, 2010) in which Miller argues that scholarship on blues and country music has obscured the exchanges with popular commercial styles such as Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and most crucially minstrelsy that brought blues and country music into existence (Miller, 2010, p. 9). Whilst notions of authenticity connected to the

minstrel tradition were born from racial and market contact, folkloric notions centred on the value of isolation, and Miller states a colour line emerged from a combination of processes that led to the supplantment of the former in the 1880s through to the 1920s (Miller, 2010, p. 276). Key 19<sup>th</sup>-century innovations in Miller's narrative are the passing of segregation legislation in southern states in the 1880s, the formation of the American Folklore Society in 1888, the mastery of mass-marketed practices by New York sheet music publishers, and the invention of the gramophone by Thomas Edison in 1877. As these developments came to be both encountered and embedded in society, a colour line emerged built on newly emerging conclusions that commercial popular music was the music of immigrants and was therefore foreign to southern culture, and that there was a definitive correlation between racialised music and racialised bodies. Miller states the expectation towards the end of his narrative, that performers felt pressure to not only *employ* but *embody* racialised sounds, essentially put an end to the employment of sounds by both black and white performers, who at the start of Miller's narrative regularly engaged with such sounds, and so the impact of attitudinal changes in society, constitutive of the colour line, can be seen in their enforcement on entertainment practices (Miller, 2010, pp. 2-4, italics in original). Miller's approach is characterised by a focus on repertoire 'to avoid the potential dangers of overstating the differences between black and white performance styles' and a view of folklore as a framework for interpreting sociocultural history as it developed within the academy. Miller makes a valid point in justification of his methodological approach on repertoire by stating that the performance approach, with emphasis on musical elements, may result in definitions of music cultures that exclude practitioners with strong social, cultural, and political links to the culture under study, as they may produce music that does not contain such stylistic elements (Miller, 2010, pp. 14-15). However, whilst this approach works in the confines of Miller's historical study, in a project that aims to assess the extent to which the traditions of the past are manifest in the present, sole focus on sociocultural aspects of a particular tradition could obscure the full range of hermeneutic processes that enable listeners to identify music and which may lead to a complication in the formation of cultural identity groups in a contemporary context. Nonetheless, Miller's study is valuable for both shedding light on both how the folkloric paradigm developed, and how

the blues music tradition may be contextualised historically, that is as a commercial and mass-marketed product at least until the mid-1920s.

The deconstruction of white myths and romanticism associated with the development of the blues is the sole purpose of Elijah Wald's *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (Wald, 2004). Wald makes a number of points concerned with music categorisation and the folk/popular dichotomy, and additionally indicates how he understands blues music of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The underpinning to these points is a methodological focus on the primacy of the audience as opposed to the performer, as it is the audience that creates the world in which the performer operates, and it is the audience that defines, supports, and consumes the music (Wald, 2004, pp. 250-251). Wald's overarching argument is that our understanding of blues music has been constructed by people detached from the culture, and aims to redress this by working under a definition of blues that centralises what the majority of black consumers called blues in any given period. In drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from sources such as black newspaper articles in the *Chicago Defender* and Billboard chart information, Wald's understanding of the blues is as a popular music form, performed by professionals who would adjust their repertoire based on the demands of the audience and do so with a keen interest in the popular hits of the day (Wald, 2004, pp. 43-45). These links between the composition of the audience and the associated effects on music style are summed up towards the end of the book:

As long as blues was being created for African American listeners, although it changed with the changing fashions, its core virtues were entertainment, swing, and familiarity....The white blues audience...expected these singers to be quite unlike themselves, and to provide both a profound emotional experience and a view into another way of life (Wald, 2004, pp. 250-251).

Wald provides an alternative conceptualisation of this across class lines by suggesting that what was a working-class audience listening to working-class music shifted to a middle-class audience who desired to hear working-class music. The standards imposed

on blues music by white audiences, which included the image of the guitar god and extended instrumental soloing, in the 1960s is acknowledged in the book as a contribution to the development of the blues genre. However, Wald's contribution to an understanding of blues music by his own admission, as a white 'acolyte of both folk romanticism and the rock rebel image', sees blues in an almost stagnated state since the 1970s consisting of black and white performers continuing in the same stylistic vein as those who made a living when blues-marketed music was popular (Wald, 2004, pp. 248-249). Despite this, Wald is happy to acknowledge rap as a contemporary blues music style but does not give any detailed attention to such due to it being exemplary of an unpopular opinion (Wald, 2004, pp. 255, 264), perhaps suggesting how constraints imposed on the definitions of blues in the past persist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through his insistence on the pluralism of blues music styles, Wald highlights the complications in defining the blues stating that categories are merely ways of grouping and marketing music rather than as descriptors of music related to how music actually sounds (Wald, 2004, pp. 4-6). In avoiding folkloric and musicological standards applied to stylistic divisions of music, defined in retrospect and that Wald states would have seemed ridiculous to blues performers and buyers at the time, an all-encompassing depiction of the blues is sought that includes those performers such as Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Mamie Smith 'who gave the music its name' (Wald, 2004, pp. 6-7). Whilst this approach certainly yields a broader understanding of the development of blues music and correctly challenges marketing practices concerned with music style, the small attention paid to musicological standards, even when applied retrospectively, seems a little too dismissive, as the stylistic characteristics of music often enable listeners to identify blues and blues-derived music, even if a listener can not describe with accuracy what it is they are actually hearing, and despite the application of such standards in the demarcation of music classification proving to be overly restrictive. However, Wald's research is a valuable revision of the blues historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that largely ignored the artists most popular with black audiences such as Leroy Carr and Bobby Bland and which instead lauded the relatively insignificant Robert Johnson who became a signifier of folk authenticity and a blues legend in the years after his death.

The romanticism surrounding Robert Johnson's life is also dismantled in *Robert Johnson, Mythmaking, and Contemporary American Culture* by Patricia Schroeder (2004) in which the repeated disappearance of Johnson into an image or a sign is elucidated as a reflection of contemporary American cultural practices and discourses. Similarly to Wald (2004), one of Schroeder's central arguments is concerned with how an understanding of Robert Johnson's era and the blues, in general, has been shaped by mediating influences but contrastingly focuses on multimedia formats such as films in addition to visual images in which Johnson is represented, as opposed to specific sound recordings and the consumers who purchased them. Schroeder traces the mythology of Johnson's life utilising Roland Barthes conceptualisation of myth as a second-order semiological system, which takes a sign resulting from a primary semiotic equation and is utilised as an empty devoid-of-meaning signifier in the next level of interpretation (Schroeder, 2004, pp. 12-13). Additionally drawing upon Jacques Derrida's theory of 'hauntology', Schroeder summarises Johnson in semiotic terms:

...once you take Robert Johnson out of his original context, he becomes a floating signifier, detached from history, a spectre revived for a variety of artistic and ideological purposes but never wholly in the control of his reanimator. He is like Frankenstein's monster, operating with will beyond that of his creator (Schroeder, 2004, p. 93).

The representation of the mythology surrounding Robert Johnson in the media is utilised to provide a commentary on the complications in contemporary American culture through both its production and consumption. Indeed this is the primary focus of the book and whilst Schroeder shows how myths can be invented with the implication that historical study reveals as much about the present as it does the past (Schroeder, 2004, p. 72), it is not intrinsically a book about blues music, but rather the mass media culture that envelopes it, as experienced from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Essentially, Schroeder's research reveals how a search for the past remains a part of the American cultural scene and therefore, in a project that explores the relationship between the past and the present, such a work is considered valuable. Building on the revisionist literature

of Wald (2004) and Palmer (1982), the main argument Eric W. Rothenbuhler (2006) states in a paper titled *For-the-record Aesthetics and Robert Johnson's Blues Style as a Product of Recorded Culture* is that, as the title suggests, Johnson developed his repertoire and music style by listening to mass media formats such as records and radio. Through a stylistic comparison of Johnson's musical performance in the recording of *Walkin' Blues*, with performances of the same song by Son House, Rothenbuhler points to the relatively elaborate style Johnson had developed, that included walking bass figures, turnarounds, and clear conclusions to songs in multiple takes, as one of the reasons Johnson's recordings were lauded at the expense of others a number of decades after his death in the 1960s. The view that Johnson produced recorded performances that could be considered as ahead of their time is entirely plausible considering the recollections of performers such as Johnny Shines, who points to the diversity of the material Johnson listened to on the radio, in research by Wald (2004, p. 118). However, Rothenbuhler's implication that Johnson *knew* he was recording for an audience of the future is perhaps less easy to conceive as it would in some way suggest Johnson could see into the future (Rothenbuhler, 2006, p. 80) and therefore further *contribute* to the mythology surrounding Johnson's life as opposed to the dismantling of such, which is in essence Rothenbuhler's overarching aim. Similarly to Schroeder, in *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (Landsberg, 2004), Alison Landsberg also explores the political ramifications of mass media forms but conceptualises the power of mass culture in what she terms 'prosthetic memory'. Through the exploration of three cases in which prosthetic memory is characterised by its capacity to be 'worn' as an unnatural and interchangeable mark of trauma, Landsberg's main argument is that 'mass cultural commodities, and in particular the prosthetic memories...challenge the concept of private property' as they are memories that can not be owned and whose meanings can never be entirely compounded as invariable, 'subverting the capitalist logic that produced them' (Landsberg, 2004, pp. 20, 147). Particularly pertinent to issues of cultural identity that characterise discourse on blues music culture is Landsberg's attention to Alex Haley's *Roots* novel (Haley, 1976) and accompanying television miniseries (*Roots*, 1977). As a descendant of slaves in the South, Haley's personal quest in seeking his ancestral lineage provides the foundation for

the novel and miniseries that centralise Haley's ancestor Kunta Kinte in his enslavement in his West African homeland and subsequent displacement to America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst Landsberg points to the impact the story had on both African Americans and whites, prompting individuals to take interest in their own genealogy (Landsberg, 2004, p. 105), the limits to prosthetic memory are perhaps indicated in the fact that seeing the racist world through Kunta Kinte's eyes, particularly in the multipart adaption for television, does not mean that a white viewer's cultural identity or race changes after acquiring such prosthetic memories of slavery. However, it is possible that white subjectivities may be altered by the addition of prosthesis and as Landsberg tentatively suggests 'for white people, learning to see the world through black eyes might have a radical effect on both their world view and their politics' (Landsberg, 2004, p. 83). Whilst it may be difficult to accurately measure the extent to which such mass media technologies such as the Internet, that Landsberg specifically pinpoints as a platform for engaging with 'sites of experience' (2004, p. 33), have on the cultural identity politics of individuals and groups across the globe, it is clear that Landsberg's conceptualisation of prosthetic memory has at the least, the potential to influence a person's sociocultural outlook in the future and therefore must be considered in discourse concerning the development of blues music culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Correspondingly to *Escaping the Delta..., In Search of the Blues* by Marybeth Hamilton (2009) reveals the extent to which the ideologies of folklorists and record collectors have shaped and constrained a broad understanding of the blues. Hamilton dismantles the stereotypical definition of the authentic bluesman by documenting and stripping away the romanticism surrounding the Delta blues. Additionally, Hamilton shows how sound recording devices were 'at once the prime destroyer of authenticity and an unparalleled tool of authentication' in the minds and hands of folklorists in their search for authentic black music during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hamilton, 2009, p. 22). Hamilton uses this contradiction as a platform for selecting the individuals who appear in the narrative in that they may shed light on such a paradox. As a result and quite uniquely amongst the majority of blues music scholars, the central figures in Hamilton's book are predominantly white listeners as opposed to black performers and their associated

performances. Through the examination of the writings and exchanges between folklorists, sociologists, and record collectors such as Dorothy Scarborough, Samuel Charters, John Lomax, Alan Lomax, Frederic Ramsey, Howard W. Odum, and James McKune, Hamilton argues that all such characters were obsessive in their pursuits of an ‘undiluted and primal black music’, underpinned by an emotional attachment to racial difference, and from the ensuing struggles that characterised such exchanges, the idea of the Delta blues emerged (Hamilton, 2009, pp. 20-22). In the conclusion, the revivalists detailed in the book reinvented tradition in their search for the sources of life, and in Hamilton’s words ‘at their most positive, they enriched understanding and broadened white horizons. At their worst, they fed on a faintly colonialist romance with black suffering, an eroticisation of African American despair’ (Hamilton, 2009, p. 243). Hamilton’s contribution to blues scholarship is significant in both: the dismantling of the Delta blues as a product of both romanticism and notions of racial difference; and the relationship of perceptions of authenticity with recording technology and the commodification of cultural artefacts. Although the analysis of music is not a primary concern, Hamilton pays relatively small attention to the stylistic features inherent in the recordings, which in a number of cases may have been the initial reason for the attraction to music largely viewed as primitive by the characters in the narrative. Consequently, and perhaps in emphasising the emotional attachment to racial difference, there is a sense that the elements that may define a listening experience in acoustic terms are overlooked. Additionally, and as she openly states (Hamilton, 2009, pp. 261, 287), the vividness in Hamilton’s blues narrative at several points in the text is largely the result of the author’s imagination, however, the key points in the book are supported with reference to published historical documents, blues scholarship, and archival data relating to folk culture and folklore.

Scholarship on the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century also demonstrates how geographical location continues to impact on perceptions of blues culture as it did in the scholarship of Evans (1982), Palmer (1982), and Lomax (1994) in the previous century. Adam Gussow (2006) introduces his essay titled *Where is the Love?: Racial Violence, Racial Healing, and Blues Communities* with the assertion that ‘Mississippi is a home of the blues, if not

perhaps *the home*' (Gussow, 2006, p. 34, italics in original) by pointing both to the proliferation of blues icons, including B.B. King, Charley Patton, and Robert Johnson, who were born in the area, and the violence and humiliation that black citizens suffered between 1890 and 1965. Gussow's principal argument is that processes of racial healing with regards to blues music culture are taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the activities and events that occur not only within a specific location, which has clear sociocultural links to the traditions of the past, but in global contexts are used as evidence to support this claim.

...the paradox of the blues, the soundtrack of segregation and the witness to racial violence, has in our own day become the instrument through which so many are pursuing the project of racial healing. Blues performers, blues writers, and blues-based activists challenge us to throw off our reflexive cynicism and unconscious despair about American race relations (Gussow, 2006, p. 52).

The awarding of an honorary title to B.B. King by the University of Mississippi in 2004 which was accompanied by a live performance as King's standard fee of \$50,000 was met by the educational establishment are in Gussow's words evidence of blues as 'a force for economic justice and interracial fraternity' with such gestures described as 'symbolic rituals of atonement whose healing moment was evident to all' (Gussow, 2006, p. 36). As a son of a sharecropper in a time and place where exploitation was the norm, it is inconceivable that King could have received such admiration and respect perhaps even 50 years prior to the publication of Gussow's paper in what is his home state. So Gussow is correct in pointing to how, through the passing of time, prejudicial attitudes concerned with racial difference have changed. However, Gussow's claim that 'the blues today are at many points around the globe the musical backdrop for a multiracial utopia grounded in the gospel of racial and ethnic healing' (Gussow, 2006, p. 38), may be overstated. Gussow's observation that blues music merchandise is publicly visible in artefacts of clothing worn in France, Germany, and Italy does not necessarily mean that those who wear such are promoting racial healing, irrespective of any particular slogan that such may appear to advocate. It is entirely possible that one may enjoy listening to a particular

type of music but maintain prejudicial views of the people and culture believed to have nurtured such artefacts. There is also the perception that the social-historical decontextualisation of the blues, as in the aforementioned B.B. King performance, may be considered as an expression of the desire for limited and selective contact with aspects of African-American culture that generally excludes the people most closely associated with such cultural forms (Schroeder, 2004, p. 108). Additionally, a recent sociological study in Clarksdale, Mississippi by Brian Foster (2017) illustrates how blues tourism and blues music festivals in the area are perceived largely negatively by the black community, as interviewees in Foster's study are found to be both dismissive of the music performed at such events and rarely attend, whilst there is also a perception that blues festivals are continually forced upon local communities with little-to-no economic benefit felt by residents in the area. Gussow acknowledges both that the blues is still present in black communities in the South, and the fact that not all black citizens appreciate white engagement with the blues, further correctly stating that searches for 'authentic' blues music in black communities may wound rather than heal the hosts (Gussow, 2006, p. 46). Gussow's optimistic view of blues music as an instrument for racial healing influences his blues typology, within which he defines blues as 'evolving from a black southern subculture (1890-1920) into a black American pop music with white minority audience (1920-1960), a white Anglo-American folk and electric subculture (1960-1990), and a worldwide roots music aligned in significant ways with the spirit of beloved community (1990-present)' (Gussow, 2006, p. 40). As indicated above, engagement in the blues may not always represent or be perceived to be emblematic of 'the spirit of beloved community' as Gussow suggests, and the typology also omits what Evans (2011) draws attention to in the potential of a black minority audience, particularly from the 1960s. Despite this, the typology largely correlates with other 21<sup>st</sup> century studies, including Wald's (2004), which underscore how the blues has developed in relation to its audience, and Gussow's paper is largely useful for drawing attention to the continued role a sense of place continues to play in contemporary practices and the associations to the traditions of the past.

Media and communication scholar Murray Forman (2002; 2012) has most notably explored in detail, and argued for, the unquestioned centrality of space and place in hip-

hop in *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Forman, 2002). In this book, Forman states hip-hop and rap acts emphasise place and locality in musical forms that take urban environments, articulated in terms such as 'the ghetto, the inner city, and the hood', as 'the foundation' of cultural production (Forman, 2002, p. xvii-xix). A distinction between rap and its musical predecessors is also briefly highlighted: 'Whereas blues, rock, and R&B have traditionally cited regions or cities... contemporary rap is even more specific, with explicit references to particular streets, boulevards and neighborhoods, telephone area codes, postal service zip codes or other sociospatial information' (Forman, 2002, p. xvii). Whilst a sense of place is then of paramount importance in the 'extreme local', to use Forman's term, and to the construction of lyrical and musical themes in rap and hip-hop, Forman (2012) also points to the communication of 'support, nurture and community' within articulations of place, and that 'the requirement of maintaining strong local allegiances is a standard practice in hip hop' (Forman, 2012, pp. 255, 267). Therefore, hip-hop tracks also articulate how places are inhabited and how they are made to acquire and portray meaning, echoing the concerns of predecessors, including the blues musicians and performers noted throughout this thesis. However, and in Forman's view, such processes occur with both greater frequency and specificity in hip-hop and rap lyrics.

In addition to the ethnomusicological and sociomusicological concerns of interdisciplinary scholars that centre on cultural identity, musicological studies on the blues represent approaches to the analysis of blues music artefacts that prioritise different stylistic features of composition, performance, and repertoire as they relate to the traditions of the past. As a consequence, this leads to further varying conceptions of how the blues is to be understood in a contemporary context and may also complicate conceptions of cultural identity. Gussow (2006) points to the complications of musicological definitions that may be perceived to have constrained, and continue to constrain the blues in the paradoxical statement that the blues is 'endlessly malleable yet hewing with surprising tensile strength to their distinctive AAB stanzaic form and sweet-sour tonality...' (Gussow, 2006, p. 40).

Jeff Todd Titon's seminal *Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis* (Titon, 1994) originally published in 1977 exists within ethnomusicology as a musical, lyrical, and cultural analysis of pre-WWII country blues recordings released between 1926 and 1930. Titon identifies four blues families within approximately half of a 44 song sample and it is from the overall sample consisting of 48 song transcriptions that Titon derives a song-producing system. Analysis of form, with the AAB stanzaic structure utilised as the foundation, leads Titon to offer that almost all songs within the sample featured a division in the first two lines, and it is from this distinction that Titon infers models referred to as blues families (Titon, 1994, pp. 141-142). A 'downhome blues scale' is also established, which refers to blue notes as sets of pitch complexes constructed around the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> degrees of the scale which has an overall range of a tenth. The manner in which singers consistently approach pitch complexes in the corpus for analysis is extracted and formulated as a 'downhome blues mode' and in this context, Titon defines a scale as the identification of pitches in a group of songs, and mode as an indication of their potential uses (Titon, 1994, p. 154). In accordance with Titon's definition of the song-producing system in action, a blues singer thinks of a tune, manipulates the tune for each line of text and stanza, syllabic stress is added through pitch, rhythmic, and dynamic emphasis, and occasionally the singer is constrained to emphasise weak syllables of text in order to maintain the structure of the tune (Titon, 1994, p. 167). Additionally, the time signature is 4/4 and songs are normally isometric; phrases normally begin on an unstressed note; syncopation may occur on any beat; and duple and triple rhythmic contrast may exist across vocal and instrumental parts or within the vocal part in dissimilar sections within a song. The tempo is noted to often increase over the duration of each song with an average initial stanza progressing at 119 beats per minute and the average of the final stanza measured as 136.5 beats per minute (Titon, 1994, p. 152). Whilst Titon's depth of musicological analysis may be seen as a type of landmark in blues music scholarship, Titon (1993) himself later reflects on how his research activities that led to a formulaic construction of folk blues through a finite sample of recordings actually contributed to and constituted the genre as part of the 1960s blues revival (Titon, 1993, p. 222). In this respect, Titon's (1994) study demarcates the boundaries of blues music with the implication that only the material under analysis is

worthy of such scholarly attention and perhaps inadvertently frames other blues styles such as Chicago blues as inauthentic. This ideological stance may be seen in the preface in which Tilton asserts 'early downhome blues music is best regarded as folk music...despite the dangers of the implication that if downhome blues is folk music, then downhome black Americans must constitute a folk group' (Tilton, 1994, p. xviii). Such an approach to the conceptualisation of blues music tends to ignore the cultural exchanges that took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that led to its formation, as Miller (2010) demonstrates. The dissemination of blues music artefacts in a white capitalistic society from the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through advances made in recording and broadcast technology, also points to the inseparability of blues music from broader social patterns in the commodification of culture. There is also the implication of uniformity in musical taste when it is clear that not all black consumers listen to blues music, in the same manner in which not all white Americans listen to country music.

In *Long Lost Blues: Popular Blues in America, 1850-1920* Peter C. Muir (2010) takes a musicological approach to titular blues publications in both sheet music form and audio recorded artefacts and as such gives primacy to the culture that produced them. Muir points to variation in the augmentation of the twelve-bar form in popular blues in addition to the greater through-composed approach composers such as W.C. Handy adopted that reflected the conventions of Tin Pan Alley, as one distinguishing feature between popular blues and what would become known as folk blues. Muir points to a rare exception, *Nigger Blues* published in 1913 by Lee Roy 'Lasses' White, which features a twelve-bar sequence throughout and the same melody for each of its six stanzas. However, Muir cites the memoirs of Handy in stating that popular blues composers of the 1910s were generally conscious of avoiding monotony and used a number of techniques to add variation to their songs (Muir, 2010, pp. 66-71). The use of blue notes, defined in this context as the microtonal flattening by a semitone of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scale, is also pinpointed by Muir as a distinguishing feature of popular blues within popular music at the time, although there is the concession that blue notes are also found in non-blues styles in the period but 'they occur with neither the frequency nor the intensity with which they appear in popular blues' (Muir, 2010, p. 75). A further musical

characteristic Muir finds striking in its distinction from popular music, is the use of the ‘barbershop ending’ in popular blues at the time, found in almost a third of the artefacts within his study. The harmonic figure consists of a chromatically descending run of chords over a tonic pedal that concludes on the first beat of the final measure on the root chord. Skip James is mentioned as a folk-blues performer who often utilises the device and Muir suggests its popularity ‘in both folk and popular blues is explained by the fact that its mood is one of wistful contemplation. This makes it particularly well suited to the expression of melancholic introspection that is so characteristic of blues’ (Muir, 2010, p. 75). A heightened emotional state is also used as a potential reason that an ascending or descending four-note chromatic melodic pattern is found in over half of the popular blues songs published between 1912 and 1920, with an early example being *Dallas Blues* published by Hart Wand in 1912, but it is scarce in the melodies of folk blues (Muir, 2010, p. 77). Finally, a further characteristic of popular blues in Muir’s study is the textual phrase “I’ve got the blues”. Muir approximates that four-fifths of popular blues songs make use of it, making explicit that the singer has the blues, and it is often positioned prominently in the chorus section in each song and in the song title. Whilst this phrase is derived from folk blues influences, in popular blues the phrase is explicitly stated, and Muir points to the findings of Taft’s (2013) lyrical study, that shows the phrase is used less than formulas associated with travel in folk blues, as a distinguishing factor between folk blues and popular blues songs (Muir, 2010, pp. 77-78). Perhaps unsurprisingly, popular blues songs, though often neglected in blues scholarship as Muir points out (Muir, 2010, p. 1) and often perceived as less ‘bluesy’, are connected to folk-blues traditions in some manner. The British blues-rock of the 1960s is highlighted as being analogous to the popular blues of the 1910s, as the group Cream are clearly dissimilar to Robert Johnson sonically yet were also clearly influenced by the folk-blues recordings associated with Johnson (Muir, 2010, p. 3). The evidence provided by Muir in his distinction between folk blues and popular blues is convincing although there are so many exceptions and variants in the usage of the musicological characteristics noted above in folk blues and how they may be received, that the study raises more questions than it answers. The use of blue notes is interesting in that the heightened intensity of one unresolved blue note in one song may be compared with a separate song containing

frequent blue notes slurred to produce a milder less tense aesthetic but the question of which song represents the blues most accurately would be hard to answer on this characteristic alone, despite the fact one song may feature the word blues in the title and the other may not. The proliferation of blue notes in the songs of contemporary music styles is omnipresent and whilst, as in Muir's study, there are popular songs that utilise blue notes more prominently than others, it is important to bear in mind the subjectivity of a listener and the context in which such characteristics may be sounded. Hans Weisethaunet (2001) draws specific attention to this aspect of blues music listening in the paper *Is there such a thing as the 'blue note'?* in which he suggests a conceptual reworking of consonance and dissonance, arguing that the harmonic structure that underpins popular music styles including rock, blues, and some jazz styles in performance practice 'represents both a totally different conception of harmony to that of the Western functional (tonal) harmony and also represents a different comprehension of dissonance/consonance in music' (Weisethaunet, 2001, p. 99). In his conception of 'blue harmony' Weisethaunet states that listeners of blues music do not hear the use of flattened minor pitches performed on parallel major harmonic progressions as dissonant, and points to the oversimplified idea of Western major/minor harmony with additional blue notes, concluding that there is, in fact, no such thing as a blue note (Weisethaunet, 2001, pp. 102, 105). Whilst the ways in which an understanding of musical elements may be developed through musical analysis is clearly helpful in providing context, Weisethaunet's study usefully highlights that outcomes from such analytical processes do not always correlate with what one actually hears when listening to a piece of popular music.

From this inductive review of the literature, four overlapping primary themes in blues scholarship are identified for further exploration. These are race, place, technology, and the authentication of cultural artefacts. These themes are perceived to dominate discourse concerned with blues music and together constitute the depiction and imagining of the stereotypical blues music performer who is a black musician residing in a rural environment in the southern states of America, and who is self-accompanied in performance through the use of a steel-string acoustic guitar. Secondary themes that are identified in the literature are concerned with revivalist practices and the categorisation of

music performers and their performances. The stereotypical blues performer is only *truly* known by a handful of listeners and exists in obscurity. The performer and associated live performances and recordings are believed to be the antithesis of commercially popular music forms and may be categorised as folk blues, Delta blues, country blues, or downhome blues and recorded in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Authentic blues music is understood as consisting of a twelve-bar, AAB verse form with the articulation of flattened pitches on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scale, and lyrical themes concerned with love, loss, and travel.

## **Chapter 1: Methodology**

In this chapter, an account of the fields of ethnomusicology and musicology, their relationship, and the methodological approach undertaken is provided. This is followed by the detailing of the main conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin and run through the thesis and the chapters that comprise it. In addition to ethnomusicology and musicology, methodologies are drawn from a range of fields and sub-disciplines in the humanities and social sciences including cultural studies, popular music studies, and media and communication. The main methods of data collection and analysis and the application of such is then explained and followed by considerations pertaining to ethics and the potential limitations to the thesis.

### **Ethnomusicology**

At present, there is no all-encompassing definition of the field of ethnomusicology or a widespread consensus on what the field really is which has led to the proposition that we may consider the coexistence of *ethnomusicologies* in different global locations and also within a singular locale, irrespective of size (Pettan, 2015, p. 37; Bohlman, 2008, p. 100; Rice, 2014). However, as a methodological approach, we may consider ethnomusicology as a confluence of ethnography and musicology. Martin Stokes (2013) has made the point that the field of ethnomusicology may be characterised as a ‘contextual tradition’ which emphasises the division in the field over the true focus of study - ‘the music itself’ or the ‘contexts’ of music. Whilst such a characterisation may be unwanted and open to debate, there is broader agreement that ethnomusicologists ‘attend to music’s complex social and political entanglements, to global relations of encounter, and to the possibility that music - and the study of it - might change us collectively’ (Stokes, 2013, p. 839). As a review of the literature has illustrated, methodological approaches to the study of blues music culture are characterised by sociological, musicological, and cultural concerns. In approaching blues music culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this interdisciplinary project the field of ethnomusicology provides the framework for exploration of blues music’s complex social and political entanglements. Whilst there may be central questions and

concepts in an ethnomusicologist's thought process that lead to 'the notion that the entire field is identified by the quest for a central question: what is that ethnomusicologists are trying to do; what basic question do they wish to answer, or with what principle task are they concerned?' (Nettl, 2010, p. xx), the general aim outlined by Stokes above and the meeting of this aim enables us to achieve a better understanding of people making music or music in (or as) culture. More specifically, factors that govern musical development and change may be identified, concerns of the interpretation of meaning in music may also arise, and the physical and emotional reactions of humans to music can also become a focal point in ethnomusicological study.

The identity of the field is continuously evolving as ethnomusicologists 'focus their energies on adapting to new environments, contexts and opportunities, as well as continuing to draw inspiration from other disciplines' (Stobart, 2008, p. 19).

Ethnomusicologists not only examine relationships in human worlds but also social relationships between people and things (for example, Bates, 2012) as the field is perpetually redesigned and redefined (Post, 2018). Despite the development in the field to encompass the study of *all* of the world's music produced by *anyone* (Pettan, 2015, p. 37; Rice, 2014, p. 9), traditional perceptions of the field persist with regards to disciplinary boundaries (Stobart, 2008, p. 3). As Laudan Nooshin (2011) notes, the assertion that 'Western music is just too different from other musics' implies that ethnomusicologists only study 'non-Western' music or world music in which cultural others are marginalised with the West centrally positioned at the top (Nooshin, 2011, p. 288). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this view appears to be antiquated as the research of Daniel Lundberg (2015), Amanda Bayley (2011), Rachel Beckles Willson (2009) and Tina Ramnarine (2008) illustrates. Consequently the field 'can no longer meaningfully be thought of as the study of world music' (Stokes, 2013, p. 826), but points to 'the value of all music and to the abilities of musicians from various traditions to learn from each other' (Ramnarine, 2008, p. 90). Henry Stobart (2008) has also shown how participants in his study did not appear to assume that the field is identified with the exotic, defined as 'originating in or characteristic of a distant foreign country' (Oxford Online, 2018), and highlights the otherwise automatic identification of an ethnomusicologist with the exotic as 'a default identity applied to anybody researching music' perceived as such (Stobart,

2008, pp. 3, 10). The integration of ‘the familiar and the similar’ in addition to ‘the exotic and the different’ (Stokes, 2008, p. 209) has broadened the scope of the field to include what is widely described as ‘ethnomusicology at home’ (Nooshin, 2011, p. 285; Ramnarine, 2008, p. 91).

The investigation of one’s own culture and/or musical traditions from one’s own nation largely defines ethnomusicology at home (Nettl, 2010, p. xix; Stock, 2008, p. 202). However, even this concept is challenged by changing views of the world that are now immersed in concerns for hybridisation, fusion, and bricolage that characterise music in a globalised, spatially limitless, and unstable world. Such processes of fusion and hybridisation then, complicate the proposition of ethnomusicology at home as ‘the musical practices of home, we now see, are intricately entangled with the musical practices of the outside world, and always have been’ (Stokes, 2013, p. 836). As will be seen in the opening chapters of this thesis, the blues music genre specifically has been characterised by cross-cultural engagement in its production and consumption, and in its origins in the diasporic movement of peoples to the West and as part of the Great Migration. Such global cultural flows that are indicative of the *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideoscapes* that Arjun Appadurai (2006) has previously defined, form the basis for: perspectives on music in (or as) culture as becoming increasingly homogenised (Nettl, 2010, p. 57); and/or the calls for ethnomusicologists who have trained in the West to explain practices of global musics through sameness instead of difference (Agawu, 2003).

Complications of a definition of ethnomusicology at home also impact on distinctions historically made in the field between self and other and insider and outsider. Nicholas Cook (2008) suggests that such distinctions are unstable and ‘no longer embedded in either musicological or ethnomusicological practice’ (Cook, 2008, p. 63).

Ethnomusicologists have emphasised their role as both cultural insider and outsider simultaneously in studies of Western art music, as Bayley (2011) does in her study on the Kreutzer Quartet wherein her experience as a viola player in string quartets enables her to ‘write as an outsider with an insider’s knowledge’ and dually acknowledges participating in the traditions, ‘interpre[ing it] according to indigenous standards’ (Bayley, 2011, p.

388). Similarly, I adopt an outsider's position with regards to writing and African-American culture, but utilise an insider's knowledge with regards to blues music performance, having engaged with the tradition since I started learning to play the guitar. One could argue I adopt a solely insider's perspective considering the birth of the blues in the West and more specifically the British blues boom of the late 1950s and 1960s. However, it is suggested that by making familiar aspects of blues music culture unfamiliar and writing as an outsider, enables me to examine my relationship with the genre and potentially question fundamental assumptions through adoption of an ethnomusicological approach.

## **Ethnomusicology & Musicology**

Despite any historical distances between the observer and the object of study, the investigation of one's own tradition has largely characterised the field of musicology in which any perceived contextual differences are ideally eradicated through grounding the interpretation within one's self as much as possible (Cook, 2008, p. 16; Beard & Gloag, 2016, p. 254). Before discussing further the relationship of ethnomusicology to musicology, it is deemed necessary to provide an overview of the main developments in the latter field.

The positivism that characterised traditional musicology of much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that aimed to validate musical artefacts through quasi-scientific comparisons of music with factual knowledge, was seriously challenged by US musicologist Joseph Kerman in *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Kerman, 1985). Kerman argues that such an approach is to the detriment of the progression of music criticism, as the value of musical works was unquestioned and data was rarely presented for aesthetic appraisal or hermeneutic study (Kerman, 1985, pp. 42-43). The publication of this text has since been seen as a potentially useful point in the division between a modernist and postmodernist paradigm (Gloag, 2012, p. 17). A postmodernist model of musicology considers music 'as relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts' (Kramer, 2002, p. 16) and as such largely rejects the formalist musicological approach and the concept of the autonomous

musical work that characterised modernist concerns in musicology for the most part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence of new musicology in the 1980s and 1990s is noted (Beard & Gloag, 2016, pp. 180, 205) to have reflected postmodern aims in developing an enriched understanding of music through analysis of its cultural, historical, social and political dimensions. A postmodern paradigm, therefore, is inherently interdisciplinary and defined by an engagement with other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

An increasing awareness and attention to music's cultural and sociopolitical contexts in musicology and the utilization of ethnography as a means to study these aspects illustrates the increasingly shared concerns with colleagues in the field of ethnomusicology. The implications of this potential 'convergence' have been explored in Henry Stobart's edited volume *The New (Ethno) musicologies* (Stobart, 2008). Cook has described this convergence as the 'ethnomusicologization of musicology' (Cook, 2008, p. 65) but this perceived convergence has not led to the collapse of musicology and ethnomusicology into a single field (Wood, 2009, p. 349) and neither has ethnomusicology been subsumed into the larger discipline of musicology as Bruno Nettl (2010) has indicated that some have called for (Nettl, 2010, p. 56). The proposal of a unified musicology (Nooshin, 2008) and to a lesser extent a 'relational musicology' as Georgina Born (2010) has suggested are also problematic due to both: a perceived status of ethnomusicology as 'other' to musicology from which it may draw strength (Nooshin, 2008, pp. 72-73); and the refusal of many ethnomusicologists to dispense with the prefix *ethno-* (Bohlman, 2008, p. 101). Whilst ethnomusicology may imply a musicology of others and assumes a questionable boundary separating 'us' from 'them' (for example, where does one ethnicity end and another begin?) it is argued that the *ethno-* prefix is important to a field in which studies of music genre focus in part or in full on ethnicity as a matter of cultural identity. As outlined in the literature review, the development of the blues music genre from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present has been dominated by concerns of and over ethnic identity. Therefore, this project attends to both positive notions of ethnicity - of a shared culture, identity and belonging, and negative notions of ethnicity that may arise in political contexts. As Jennifer Post (2018) and Abigail Wood (2009) have pointed out the field of ethnomusicology is 'in constant dialogue with itself

and the academic fields that surround it. Nevertheless, it is perhaps this diversity and dialogue that best characterize today's ethnomusicology' (Wood, 2009, p. 350). Therefore, I draw on both methodologies and methods in ethnomusicology and musicology as distinct but overlapping fields to explore the extent to which the blues maintains links to its cultural past in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This study utilises a non-positivist, postmodern, and predominately qualitative paradigm that defines reality and science as socially constructed and in this acknowledges that multiple social realities exist. Through largely inductive theory-generating research, central concerns are the interpretation of cultural artefacts and meaning, as socially constructed. The non-positivist and postmodern paradigm adopted in this thesis may be summarised by what is described as 'open interpretation':

This proposed open interpretation can be positioned as the process of understanding music through interpreting specific musical works and related issues as an ongoing process that is not restricted by concept, methodology, or predetermined conclusion, so that there is no one "correct" interpretation. In other words, the interpretation of music is always open to new challenges. In this context we are using interpretation to reflect how we understand music - how we listen to it, how we read texts about it - which may seem distinct from musical interpretation through the act of performance (Gloag, 2012, p. 19).

The author shares the widely held view that the 21<sup>st</sup> century provides a more plural and fragmented cultural context than ever before and such may be appropriately perceived in the continual emergence of explicitly hybrid popular music styles. The emergence of hybrid cultural artefacts and the politicisation of such forms in the advancement of personal and social agendas is also a primary ethnomusicological concern, highlighting how the use of such artefacts may be perceived to add value to existing traditions or erase the symbolism of sounds historically tied to a community. Technology and the use of such in culture also distinguishes contemporary ethnomusicology, as an empirical understanding of music in or as culture is most frequently developed in the principal

experiences of recorded artefacts distributed and consumed around the world, and so the audio documentation of tradition already exists, largely negating the requirement to capture live performances in ethnographic fieldwork. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is also the acceptance that it is rare to experience music that has not been mediated in at least one way or another in both its production and consumption.

## **Conceptual & Theoretical Frameworks**

The overarching research question central to the project is defined as to what extent does the blues maintain links to its cultural past? A number of key research questions and theories emerge from an inductive approach to data collection and analysis which inform and constitute the conceptual and theoretical framework of the thesis. Whilst the relevant research questions are presented in the introduction section within each chapter, the key concepts and theories are discussed below.

### **Cultural Identity, African-American Experience & Black Music**

The theories of cultural identity proposed by black writers such as Paul Gilroy (1993; 2002; 2010) and Stuart Hall (1990; 1992; 1996) promote ways of considering diasporic experience and culture from a transatlantic position that points to the fluidity and hybridity of cultural identity, deemed important when considering the past and present experiences of African Americans and their relationship to blues music. Hall (1992; 1996) suggests how diaspora identity may conflict with the superficial sense of nationalism, as cultural power is exercised to hide divisions in society resulting from ‘deep internal divisions and differences’ (Hall, 1992, p. 297). The notion of double consciousness, developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century work of black American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, as found in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois, 1996), described the difficulty that those belonging to the black diaspora faced in an oppressive environment that complicated how diasporic communities operated in the society within which they were located. As a result, cultural identity shifted not only with how black people saw themselves but also congruently with how black individuals perceived their own self

through racist eyes. In Hall's (1996) view the aim of the struggle, in which tension results from the expression of nationalist and diaspora identity and which externally reflects the internal conflict of black individuals, is to replace the 'or' within the binary 'black or British' with the potentiality or the possibility of an 'and' (Hall, 1996, p. 475). Although writing in the context of the UK, such tension may be powerfully exemplified in the experiences of displaced peoples from Africa to the US that gave rise to blues music in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and so an understanding of such conflict is considered important in an ethnomusicological exploration of the links between a popular music form and cultural identity that Hall asserts is politically situated.

Expressions of diaspora identity are considered by Gilroy (1993; 2010) to be ways in which displaced individuals make sense of the world and navigate through life, and both Hall (1996) and Gilroy (1993; 2010) point to music as comprising a central element in this imagining and reimagining of identity. Gilroy (2010) suggests we encounter music between two poles that represent strategies or choices for imagining the past in the present. The first 'is a simple recycling of old ideas which looks superficially like the continuation of vital tradition' and the second strategy 'employs effectively deskilled, dehumanised technologies which . . . have reduced a shocking modernist tradition to a tame lexicon of preconstituted fragments' (Gilroy, 2010, p. 128). Both strategies promote their own 'characteristic patterns of pseudo-commemoration' and a 'pastness to offset the manufactured immediacy demanded by insatiable consumer culture' (Gilroy, 2010, p. 128). Limits to the broad concept of cultural memory, that has become key to 'our understanding of how individuals construct everyday social reality and the sociocultural narratives that underpin this' (Bennett & Rogers, 2016, p. 38), may be elucidated in the fact that black post-World War II communities may be unified 'more by the experience of migration than by the memory of slavery and the residues of plantation society' (Gilroy, 1993, p. 81). Whilst diaspora is closely associated with the displacement of ancestral populations through the Atlantic slave trade, voluntary migration from Africa has also played a part in the African diaspora as populations have relocated not only to escape political conflicts or civil war but also in search of economic prosperity or advancement, driven by a lack of political freedoms and/or low salaries.

Although the negative effects of the process of dispersal are countered through expressions of diaspora identity which focus on ‘the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration’ (Gilroy, 2002, p. 318), collective memory is broadly theorised as a fluid construct shaped by experiences of the present and which may be witnessed in expressions of cultural identity in various diasporic contexts (Cidra, 2015; Ramnarine, 1996). As sociomusicologist Simon Frith (1996) points out in his affirmation of the link between identity and music, ‘identity is not a thing but a process - an experiential process which is most vividly grasped as music’ and further that ‘music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective’ (Frith, 1996, p. 110). Through displacement and in the passing of time, cultural codes and artefacts therefore, are malleable and such concerns are reflected in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century interpretation of cultural artefacts associated with the blues and other cultural forms of entertainment that span over a century in this work.

The music criticism of African-American writers such as Albert Murray (1990), Ralph Ellison (Ellison, Bellow & Callahan, 2003) and in particular Amiri Baraka’s writings on black music (Baraka, 1995; Jones, 2010) composed during the 1960s and 1970s when the Black Arts movement (or the Black Aesthetic movement) was prominent, illustrate how the social-historical experience of African Americans has and may continue to be linked to blues music in various ways. In Ellison’s view (Ellison, Bellow & Callahan, 2003), the blues is an art form that transcends the conditions experienced by black slaves on US soil, and whilst Murray (1990) states that the blues provided black citizens with the tools to navigate life, he downplays the severity of suffering that took place through a largely romanticised view of slavery. Murray (1990) purported that in light of the ‘totalitarian nature of tribal life’ the natives of Africa from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards ‘could hardly have regarded Africa as the stronghold of individual freedom and limitless opportunity’ suggesting the view that ‘slave runners simply landed their ships and overpowered the helpless natives at will’ was inaccurate and that despite their subsequent objectification ‘the personal and social intercourse among slaves was so fabulous in the richness of its human fellowship, humour, esthetic inventiveness and high spirits’ that slave owners could only ‘pretend to shrug it off as childishness’ (Murray, 1990, pp. 17-18, 62). In

contrast, Baraka (Baraka, 1995; Jones, 2010) emphasises the lived experience in that the blues reflects such social-historical conditions to the extent that in Baraka's opinion, no white person can access the materials that enable such cultural expression. Baraka's (Jones, 2010) conception of the blues as an impulse and as a continuum that encompasses successive black music styles highlights the diaspora network and the 'changing same' of black music (Jones, 2010, p. 205) and ensures that despite the perception of hybridised cultural forms of the diaspora, cultural continuity is maintained as new pathways into African-American history, tradition, and ethnic identity are enabled through sound. Therefore, as Gilroy's emblematic model in *The Black Atlantic* makes clear, identities are continually in motion as new routes are created through such creolised, syncretised and hybridised forms (Gilroy, 1993, p. 4). It is this potential of black music as accessible to all in its material and commodified forms that continuously affords the detection of hybridisation through the commonalities and manufactured difference that speaks to both black and white citizens across the world.

White US ethnomusicologist and theorist Ronald Radano (2013) defines the origins of authentic black music as resulting from the collusion between white slave owners and their black slaves in which *invented difference* prevented whites from obtaining the only true possession slaves had which was music (for a discussion of music othering, see pp. 23-27). This heightened racialisation of African-American music and the perpetuation of blackness would later both advance black civil rights solidarity and provide African Americans 'a form of cultural ownership whose value linked directly to the collective memory of the music's status as the original possession of US slaves' (Radano, 2012, pp. 311, 315). Whilst Radano's theorisations are congruent with Baraka's assertion in that whites can not gain full ownership of black music, the lure of upward social mobility implied by Radano as the source of motivation for the embodiment of music, is in discordance with the ethnocentricity of Baraka's writing on popular music forms and the contemporary scholarship of ethnomusicologist Portia K. Maultsby (2017) who is critical of non-racialised approaches to the study of African-American popular music in an industry in which race is institutionalised. Maultsby (2017) argues that 'cultural values and aesthetic priorities influence musical structures and the articulation of musical

elements common in world musical traditions' and in doing so contests Radano's 'radical configuring of musical significance in the construction of race' (Radano, 2003, p. 122) which Maultsby understands as promoting a 'post-racial paradigm that de-contextualizes Black music and renders it either colorless or minimally interracial and devoid of cultural connections to an African past' (Maultsby & Burnim, 2017, p. 53). The US philosopher Cornel West (1999) has stressed that 'Afro-American music is first and foremost, though not exclusively or universally, a countercultural practice with deep roots in modes of religious transcendence and political opposition. Therefore it is seductive to...alienated young people...dissatisfied with the status quo' (West, 1999, p. 474). Tricia Rose (2008; 1994) has also reiterated the 'bifocal' qualities of black culture, specifically hip-hop, in speaking to black and white audiences. The development of hip-hop's broad cross-cultural appeal to adolescents of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Rose, 2008; Samuels, 2004) reflects the counterculture of the baby boom generation in the 1960s, that gave rise to blues-rock and psychedelic rock that reimagined the blues and the derived rhythm 'n' blues forms for new audiences (Middleton, 1990, p. 29).

### **Authenticity, Genre & The Commodification of Culture**

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in accordance with developments in musicology that were characterised by positivism, increasing scholarly attention in historically accurate music performance or authentic performances gained momentum in the subsequent period. A number of meanings of the word authenticity exist in different contexts and it is important to clarify that authenticity does not, therefore, mean the same to everyone. Authenticity can be understood as existing in two groups, the first is characterised by discernment of such with respect to a piece of music, its sounds, or the intentionality that underpins such. The second group may consist of judgements of authenticity made in relation to an individual or culture. As the blues exists as a product of culture and variably referred to as a popular music style, genre, market label, and folk form, ideologies of blues authenticity have historically featured across both groups and have often given rise to dichotomies in blues music discourse such as those concerned with race or a reverence for music timbre, both linked to the traditions of the past. Therefore,

it is necessary to develop an understanding of authenticity in the context in which it is applied.

American musicologist Richard Taruskin (1995) distinguishes authentic performance from a 'modern' performance in suggesting that it is the former 'that is truly modern performance' whilst the latter 'represents the progressively weakening survival of an earlier style, inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one that is fast becoming historical' (Taruskin, 1995, p. 140). Therefore, in a 20<sup>th</sup>-century context and congruent with a modernist approach, the preoccupation with the past leads in Taruskin's meaning to works with long histories, whilst an authentic performance is not necessarily a recreation of the past but a contemporary perspective on the past and thus is viewed as the modern. One can argue such a contemporary perspective on the past also applies in the postmodern context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but in which the discussions pertaining to each factor of the two groups of authenticity are blurred further in the hybridity of a music production process that is less concerned with recreating the past than reimagining it. This is particularly applicable in the context of popular music wherein authenticity is often primarily concerned with a musician's aptitude and their potential to convey appropriate meaning to the music performed. As Simon Frith (1987) states in his characterisation of the rock music aesthetic 'good music is the authentic expression of something - a person, an idea, a feeling, a shared experience, a zeitgeist. Bad music is inauthentic - it expresses nothing' (Frith, 1987, p. 136). Authenticity in the context of popular music, therefore, can be most appropriately equated with value and in musicologist Alan Moore's (2002) words is 'a matter of interpretation which is made and fought for from within a cultural and, thus, historicised position. It is ascribed, not inscribed' (Moore, 2002, p. 210).

Contrarily, and as musicologists Hans Weisethaunet and Ulf Lindberg (2010) point out in their review of authenticity in rock criticism, popular music performances in the 1960s were *experienced* as authentic despite the mass cultural positioning of rock music at the time and as critics communicated such experiences authenticity 'was displaced from the inner-subjective sphere and essentialised as a quality inherent in the music' (Weisethaunet & Lindberg, 2010, p. 481). This understanding of authenticity and the manner in which such inscription of popular music artefacts took place led to what Frith

calls the ‘myth of authenticity’ (Frith, 1987, p. 137). The usefulness of the term in musicology has subsequently been repeatedly questioned. Taruskin (1995) has referred to authenticity as useful only for ‘commercial propaganda, the stock-in-trade of press agents and promoters’ (Taruskin, 1995, p. 90), whilst Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor (2007) describe authenticity as an aggregated ‘ideal’ that unnecessarily complicates our enjoyment of music by making us ‘lose sight of the fact that some of the things that make us judge music as inauthentic...can also enrich our musical experience considerably’ (Barker & Taylor 2007, p. 336). Ethnomusicologists Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (2000) have viewed authenticity as a precursory term to acculturation in studies of popular music and state both are ‘consigned to the intellectual dust-heap’ due to the extent of mass cultural appropriation (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000, p. 30). Whilst there is no doubting the influence of processes of globalisation on the consumption and production of popular music artefacts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that enable an ever-increasing number of people from almost anywhere in the world to engage with disparate cultures and their artefacts, discourse concerned with authenticity remains central to the construction and demarcation of the boundaries of genre and style and as Frith indicates are reflective of the subjective interpretations of popular music listeners. Moore (2002) contests Born and Hesmondhalgh’s perceivably singular understanding of authenticity through their equation of the term with originality, arguing that it is but one meaning of authenticity which ‘should not be allowed to annexe the whole’ and further defends the usefulness of the term in a postmodern context as ‘appropriation (of sonic experiences by perceivers) remains foundational to processes of authentication’ (Moore, 2002, p. 210).

In defending the usefulness and currency of authenticity in studies of popular music, Moore also calls for a shift in focus in academia from the composer or originator to the activities of various perceivers and ‘the reasons they might have for finding, or failing to find, a particular performance authentic’ (Moore, 2002, p. 211). The approach adopted in chapter five partly addresses this call through utilisation of Moore’s tripartite classification of authenticity as set out in the paper *Authenticity as Authentication* (Moore, 2002), within which Moore’s focus is on ‘who’ rather than ‘what’ is being authenticated. He refers to an ‘authenticity of expression’ or first-person authenticity,

which ‘arises when an originator (composer, performer) succeeds in conveying the impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience’ (Moore, 2002, p. 214). A second-person authenticity or ‘authenticity of experience...occurs when a performance succeeds in conveying the impression to a listener that that listener’s experience of life is being validated, that the music is “telling it like it is” for them’ (Moore, 2002, p. 220). An ‘authenticity of execution’ or third-person authenticity ‘arises when a performer succeeds in conveying the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another, embedded within a tradition of performance’ (Moore, 2002, p. 218).

Negative connotations of the impact of industrialisation referenced in numerous studies in global contexts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Butterworth, 2017; Tucker, 2013; Horowitz, 2010; Petrusich, 2009) characterise folk music ideology in which an authentic expression of a way of life and/or indigeneity is positioned in opposition to the commodification of artefacts in mass culture enabled through technological advances. In his (in)famous essay titled *On Popular Music* initially published in 1941 German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno (2002) indicated that the ‘free choice’ the listeners enact in not listening to or purchasing particular songs is in fact based upon the formulaic ‘standardization’ of popular music production itself, as an aspect of ‘pseudo-individualization’ which keeps consumers ‘in line by making them forget that what they listen to is already listened to for them, or “pre-digested”’. This ‘illusion’ of free choice and taste hides the standardisation of popular music which itself ‘divests the listener of his spontaneity and promotes conditioned reflexes’ as ‘the composition hears for the listener’ (Adorno, 2002, p. 442). Adorno’s theorisations represent perhaps the most damning critique of popular music and the commodification of culture. Whilst such generalisations and the socio-historical context of Adorno’s writings have since been judged to be inadequate and/or out-dated (Middleton, 1990, p. 37), his theories are useful when assessing popular music listening platforms and conceptions of genre in the 21<sup>st</sup> century within which there is an even broader range of mass technologies and globalised consumer practices.

The impact of modernity and globalisation is brought to the fore inherently in contemporary forms of black popular culture. In the ‘post-soul aesthetic’ concept, in which the post-soul generation is specifically defined by Mark Anthony Neal (2002) as referring to those African Americans born between 1963 and 1978 and who have no ‘nostalgic allegiance to the past’, contemporary black styles variably ‘consider issues like deindustrialization, desegregation, the corporate annexation of black popular expression, cybernization in the workforce, the globalisation of finance and communication’ and ‘the general commodification of black life and culture’ (Neal, 2002, pp. 2-3). Tricia Rose (2008; 1994) has also drawn attention to the folk/mass dichotomy in asserting that ‘once a black cultural practice takes a prominent place inside the commodity system, it is no longer considered as black practice’ (Rose, 1994, p. 83) and later writing that ‘the distorted and exaggerated use of “keeping it real” to claim that today’s commercial hip hop represents the *truth* of black ghetto life *betrays* the valuable history of black culture’s role as a community-affirming means of expressing a wide variety of perspectives and lived experiences’ (Rose, 2008, p. 144, italics my own). Such a characterisation highlights the ongoing pressure on contemporary black music producers to represent local and marginalised communities, as music styles and artefacts are not only shaped by global commodities but pulled towards the mainstream centre ground as they become commercial artefacts (Kahf, 2012). As demonstrated in the review of literature, this challenge has and continues to characterise the development and demarcation of the blues music genre from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present.

In *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth Century Popular Music* David Brackett (2016) concludes that ‘the categories respond to emerging concepts about sounds and social groups, and generate effects that enter into musical practice and the role of music in other types of social interactions, thus creating a feedback loop, a circular process that blurs the lines between the ideas of power imposed from above and the grassroots creation of musical meaning’ (Brackett, 2016, p. 331). Music genres are theoretically therefore, always in a state of flux in relation to the fluidity of cultural identity. Brackett further theorises that the ‘perpetual reclassification of musical texts becomes inevitable’ if both music style is the key differential for concepts of genre, and musical taste

differentiates demographic groupings (Brackett, 2016, p. 26). Consequently, the policing of genre boundaries becomes more difficult or less manageable in the passing of time and such difficulties are illustrated in both the review of literature and the processes of demarcation concerned with blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in chapter three.

### **Semiotics, Intertextuality & Narratology**

Whilst the methods of a formalist music analysis permit the discovery of interesting relationships in which music refers *within* itself, such methods reveal very little, if anything about how music refers *outside* itself, and the sole adoption of such methods, therefore, neglects the sociocultural relations that exist between popular music structures and the reality in which these sounds occur. In their commodified and mass-mediated distribution to diverse sociocultural groups, the meaning of a song is paramount to consumers of popular music in that if a song is presumed to mean very little, it is less likely to be purchased.

Recourse to a semiotic analysis of musical materials in ethnomusicology is in part driven by the prioritisation of concerns with meaning and the potential of music to carry meaning that is at variance with words that may accompany any given performance. Ethnomusicologists acknowledge that in language there is a consensus of opinion in the English-speaking world surrounding the meaning of words such as ‘chair’ and ‘table’, and that this specificity and predictability of meaning is unlikely to be found in a musical context in which such meanings arise and develop from varying social-historical definitions. Despite this, and as reflected in anthropology, an ethnomusicological approach understands music to be best understood as a system of signs and symbols, as analysts frequently observe humans assigning meaning to music recordings and live performances. In contrast to the field of historical musicology, which largely viewed music as meaningless (Beard & Gloag, 2016, p. 125; Rice, 2014, p. 57), the debates centring on the limitations of music meaning have largely been underpinned by the view that points to the polysemy of musical materials (Nettl, 2005, p. 319; Middleton, 1990, p. 165), or the view proposed by Philip Tagg (2012) that acknowledges music only as polysemic from a logocentric viewpoint, as ‘different individuals within the same culture

tend repeatedly to respond to the same music in quite similar ways' (Tagg, 2012, pp. 170-171). An underlying consideration of the limits to the study, therefore, is that such analysis of meaning is context specific. As discussed previously in relation to ethnomusicology at home (pp. 42-44) the matter of context is potentially complicated by the view that virtually anyone living in a heterogeneous society may be considered as a cultural insider as musical meaning may emerge from perceived similarities and differences of an artefact with others within the broader musical field (Bracket, 2000, p. 23). However, if accepting that there are practical limits to the transmutation of musical meaning as Richard Middleton suggests (Middleton, 1990, p. 154), then the cultural context in which the analysis and interpretation of musical materials takes place should be acknowledged, and is done so in this chapter. A semiotic analysis of popular music artefacts ensures that the heterogeneous audience of mass media is accounted for.

The foundation of the semiotic theory proposed by the US philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Peirce, 1982) is the theory of predication that is comprised of three categories; firstness, secondness, and thirdness, for understanding the structure of all potential experiences. In their application to experiences of sound and/or music firstness is understood as the sound itself (*Sign*), secondness refers to what the sound represents directly and the idea or thing that is encoded within the sound (*Object*), and thirdness refers to the interpretations of the sound (*Interpretant*). Piercean theory including the trichotomy *Object - Sign - Interpretant* therefore understands meaning as socially constructed making it particular suitable for the ethnomusicological study and analysis of music making in or as social life. Recent studies in ethnomusicology (Green, 2016; Cidra, 2015) illustrate how the use of music in various contexts, whether it be in the public spaces of Mexico City (Green, 2016) or in the formulation of a conception of diasporic identity amongst Cape Verdeans (Cidra, 2015), results in a semiotic battlefield that is politically situated, and the US ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2014; 2008; 1999) has long advocated the utilisation of Peircean theory in the field:

From a Peircean perspective: (1) every musical sound, performance or dance movement, and contextual feature that affects an actual perceiver is a sign, and (2) every perceiver is affected by signs in relation to his or her own personal history of experience, which is at once a partially unique but largely shared social experience (what I call the *internal context* of perceivers). So, from these two basic premises we have a way in to understanding the dialectical relations between sound/motion and social life (Turino, 2014, p. 188).

I will address the matter of internal context in the live listening exercise section later, but returning to Peircean semiotic theory specifically, sign *types* are most pertinent to the analytical role undertaken in chapters six and seven within which the primary focus is the elucidation of potential meaning(s) in a number of audio recordings and so it is necessary to finish expanding on the aspects of the theoretical and conceptual framework that relate to semiotics here now.

Philip Tagg (2012) has adapted Peircean theory in the development of a sign typology (Tagg, 2012, p. 485) as a particularly useful analytical framework with which to uncover what musical structures may connote to a listener, aiding in the development of narrative. Tagg defines three sets of sign types using the headings ‘anaphones’, ‘diataxemes’ and ‘style flags’. The first is described as ‘etymologically analogous to *analogy*’ in the ‘use of existing models in the formation of (meaningful musical) sounds’ (Tagg, 2012, p. 487); a diataxeme (derived from the word ‘diataxis’) is categorised as ‘an identifiable *element* of meaning relating to the music’s episodic order of events’ (ibid., 515); and the third main sign type ‘uses particular sounds to identify a particular musical style and often, by connotative extension, the cultural genre to which that musical style belongs’ (ibid., 522). The first and third of these sign categories are adapted from Peirce’s trichotomy of *Icon - Index - Symbol*, where an anaphone is equivalent to icon and style flags are equated to indices. In the Peircean sense, an icon physically resembles what it signifies as in a map or a photo but Tagg identifies the requirement, in its application to music, to adhere to the conventions of synaesthesia homology that allows the encoding of a sign in one domain of perception (for example, visual) to be equated with

objects/interpretants existing within another (sonic). In doing so, Tagg points to the intrinsic synaesthesia of music in refining the notion of icon in its application to music in this way (ibid, 163). With regards to indices, these ‘are signs connected either by causality, or by spatial, temporal or cultural proximity, to what they stand for’ (ibid, 162) and are adapted relatively easily in the style flags sign types defined in the typology. Turino (1999) places specific emphasis on indices as signs of experience and emotion which are ‘grounded in one’s personal and social life and thus are constitutive of identity- both in the sense of being part-and-parcel of ones [*sic*] personal past, as well as being signs of shared social experience’ (Turino, 1999, p. 235). The identification of musical indices therefore, is not only useful in contemporary music analysis but is also useful in exploring and understanding the effects of emotion and nostalgia that may impact on revivalist practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as I do in chapter eight.

Whilst technological mediation occurs at all stages of the song production process and at numerous levels within any given recording, there may be a perceivable time difference in the aesthetics of production between two or more structures within a song. Such structures and their interrelationships could also be considered as semiotic, with the potential to allude to style and genre synchronically through technological means and in this way, therefore, could be considered within Tagg’s style flag category. Sampling is, of course, one technique that can powerfully articulate such difference and ‘autosonic’ quotation as defined by Serge Lacasse (2000, pp. 38-39) refers to this predominantly digital process within which a ‘sameness of sounding’ can be achieved in the sharing of a recorded sample borrowed from one recording and transferred into that of another. This describes an intertextual relationship between the two recordings and, as a number of the audio recordings in this thesis feature such relationships, the exploratory framework for this aspect of the song must be elucidated.

In adapting the terms ‘hypertextuality’ (Lacasse, 2000) and later ‘transtextuality’ (Lacasse, 2018) for recorded popular music, as originally defined by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette (1997), Lacasse (2018) provides a model of ‘transphonography’ (replacing Genette’s suffix -textuality with -phonography, to refer to the reproduction of recorded sound) that permits the interpretation of interrelationships between and among

recordings. Pertinent aspects of this framework include the category interphonography within which there is the definition of a hypophonogram (an earlier source recording) and the hyperphonogram (the later recording that borrows from the earlier source). The relationship between what Genette originally referred to as the ‘hypotext’ and ‘hypertext’ (Lacasse, 2000, p. 37) can be complicated by the chronological order in which artefacts are experienced, as highlighted in studies of hip-hop and derived styles (Wragg, 2016; Williams, 2014; Schumacher, 2004), but both terms remain useful in the analysis of the interrelationships between recordings discussed in this thesis. Paraphonographic and metaphonographic categories are also drawn upon, specifically in chapter six, in an analysis of the song title, band name, and media interviews that provide clues both as to the intended message within the song and the creative approach of the group in the song production process. As Lacasse suggests ‘music, images, and sounds do not just interact but do so within a network of interacting individuals. Thus, transphonography can be understood to help us better understand our *own* relationship with the music and with others’ (Lacasse, 2018, p. 44, italics in original). In addition to instrumental music structures that may refer to the contexts of other recordings and performances, song lyrics are also an important consideration in the analysis of musical materials.

As previously mentioned, in any given musical performance or audio recording the song lyrics and the instrumental layers of music may communicate entirely different messages and meanings. Martin Stokes (2010) refers to the objectification and ‘the evasiveness of the voice: its slipperiness in relation to words and their meanings’ (Stokes, 2010, p. 7), whilst Allan Moore (2012) refers to everyday conversation in pointing out that verbal content only constitutes 7% of the message with the remaining 93% comprised of vocal tone and body language in his justification of dismissing literature on analysing song lyrics as text on a page (Moore, 2012, pp. 108-109). However, the importance of lyrical analysis in conveying the overall message of a song is four-fold. Firstly, lyrics have been noted as an effective means of representing the everyday life of black Americans in popular song forms such as hip-hop (Forman, 2012; Keyes, 2012; Rose, 2008) and it is often the words of a song that most clearly elucidate sociopolitical situations and experiences (Neal, 2014; Van Rijn, 2004). As such the words of a song ‘can reveal much

about cultural discourses of a specific time alongside which an artist may want to align themselves' (Machin, 2010, p. 77). Secondly, as the primary method of human communication, language permits immediacy of comprehension, and as Dai Griffiths (2003) asserts in arguing for a word-centred perspective to analysis, 'words provide us with a means to articulate a response to the song' (Griffiths, 2003, pp. 40, 43). Thirdly, the intended message of a song may rest on contrasting or contradicting messages articulated in the lyrics and the musical accompaniment (Simon, 2013) that would be missed if the words of a song were not given sufficient attention. Finally, sometimes it is only a comparatively fleeting lyrical reference that depicts how a song may be publicly received. In his summation of the song *Chinese Blues* (1915), that features no noticeable blues features other than a lyrical reference to the protagonist who has the 'Chinese blues', David Brackett suggests the song 'makes it bracingly clear how techniques of othering found in minstrelsy, coon songs, Hawaiian music, and songs about Chinatowns and immigrants were effortlessly combined with public fascination with "the blues", often overriding any sort of musical-stylistic connection' (Brackett, 2016, p. 71). Textual analysis is therefore important in the elucidation of the social dimensions of meaning, and the analysis of song lyrics in this thesis is primarily performed using critical discourse analysis, having much in common with methods of semiotics.

In chapter six, lyrical analysis is combined with elements of narrative theory drawn from the work of the Soviet folklorist Vladimir Propp, who made a significant contribution to the conception of genre in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968) first published in 1928. In this work Propp identified 31 narrative functions embedded in hundreds of Russian folk tales, concluding that each story adhered to the same pattern. In revealing these inner structural relationships, Propp pinpoints the morphology of each folk tale under examination. In elucidating the narrative structure, the identification of characters and their associated roles within a story can also be distinguished. The pinpointing of specific elements within a 'text' affords the delineation of its structure in a chronological order, characterising an empirical and inductive syntagmatic approach, as advocated by Propp who suggests that '...in folklore one can use only the inductive method....with a

preconceived hypothesis, we do not prove anything but only select data to fit the postulates' (Propp, Propp & Liberman, 1984, p. 57).

In contrast, a description of the structural pattern of an object, based on a principle of binary oppositions, with elements taken out of their sequential occurrence and grouped in one or more activity schemas distinguishes the paradigmatic approach, as championed by the Belgium-born French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (ibid., xxi). In *The Raw and the Cooked* (1983) originally published in 1964, Lévi-Strauss applies this structural perspective to the analysis of mythology with the aim of elucidating how such binary pairs or opposites, which 'can only be accurately defined by ethnographic observation and, in each instance, by adopting the standpoint of a particular culture', may be 'used as conceptual tools with which to elaborate abstract ideas and combine them in the form of propositions' (Lévi-Strauss, 1983, p. 1).

Whereas Lévi-Strauss conveyed his paradigms in a broader societal context 'demanding' that 'we place ourselves at the most concrete level - that is, in the heart of a community or of a group of communities sufficiently alike in regard to their habitat, history, and culture' (ibid., 1), Propp did not make the same relation with his morphology. However, Propp's work has been cross-culturally implemented (Propp & Wagner, 1968, pp. xii-xiv) and so the application of aspects of the methodology here to an Anglo-American song that references social-historical aspects of a predominantly African-American experience should not be impeded in this respect.

### **Tradition & Music Revivalism**

Within a definition of culture, theorist Raymond Williams (2009) defines three levels in which culture always exists, as a way of life in a 'lived' culture or set of practices, a recorded culture of signifying practices, and on a level of 'selective tradition' which connects the living culture with that of the recorded type (Williams, 2009, p. 37). The selective tradition is 'governed by many kinds of special interests' and it 'will always tend to correspond to its *contemporary* system of interests and values, for *it* is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation' (Williams, 2009, pp.

38-39, italics in original). Music revivalists and their associated practices operate within this selective level of tradition and so it is deemed necessary to provide the theoretical and conceptual bases of tradition and revivalism that underpin the methods adopted within this thesis, specifically in chapter eight.

Tradition can be most broadly defined as the passing on of customs or beliefs from generation to generation and is therefore inextricably linked to the past or a past. However, and as ethnomusicologist Laurent Aubert (2007) suggests, ‘the nature of a tradition...is not to preserve intact a heritage from the past, but to enrich it according to present circumstances and transmit the results to future generations’ (Aubert, 2007, p. 10). The continuous nature of such ‘enrichment’ then may be considered as much a reflection of the present as it is the past. Eric Hobsbawm (2013) make this point explicitly in his conceptualisation of the ‘invented tradition’, as ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2013, p. 1), suggesting that such should be expected ‘to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which “old” traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2013, p. 4). It is this potential inflexibility of tradition, in its social-historical mooring, that means for any customs or beliefs comprising a tradition to survive through the imposition of repetition, processes of formalisation and ritualisation in the continuous chain of transference must be adapted to meet the sociocultural requirements of the present. These processes of transmission are contested within and amongst musical communities, as conceptualisations of specific traditions are reimagined and reinvented over time.

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Anderson, 2006), Benedict Anderson provides a concept of an imagined community as socially constructed and imagined by members who believe they belong to a particular community despite never having face-to-face contact or minimal communications with

other members (Anderson, 2006). More pertinently, ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2011) provides the following conceptualisation of a musical community as:

‘...a collectivity constructed through and sustained by musical processes and/or performances. A musical community can be socially and/or symbolically constituted; music making may give rise to real-time social relationships or may exist most fully in the realm of a virtual setting or in the imagination. A musical community does not require the presence of conventional structural elements nor must it be anchored in a single place, although both structural and local elements may assume importance at points in the process of community formation as well as in its on-going existence’ (Shelemay, 2011, p. 14).

A musical community then may be broadly understood as the result of sociomusicological processes that enable participants to develop a consciousness of connections with other community members. As I have shown in the contextual framework of this thesis, the formation of musical communities gives rise to debates on the level of selective tradition that centre on aesthetics, cultural identity, and ownership. As Guthrie Ramsey (2003) states in his study on black music cultures ‘real people negotiate and eventually agree on what cultural expressions such as a musical gesture mean. They collectively decide what associations are conjured by a well-placed blue note’ (Ramsey, 2003, p. 25). These negotiations and debates may be representative of a basic opposition in cultural politics that exists between a ‘postmodernism of resistance’ and a ‘postmodernism of reaction’ (Foster, 1985). A resistance to the status quo and a deconstruction of modernism broadly characterises the former, whilst the latter refuses to accept modernism and celebrates the status quo (Foster, 1985, pp. ix-x). As Aubert (2007) states, for some individuals and musical communities ‘tradition is opposed to all kinds of development or evolution. For them a traditional expression is thus of conservative definition: frozen, incapable of evolving, or even retrograde and reactionary’ (Aubert, 2007, p. 22). Despite, in Aubert’s view, this opinion being ‘contradicted by reality’ there are numerous examples of approaches to music production

and revivalism that may be construed as being reactionary and there are examples that may be construed as representative of both political standpoints throughout this thesis.

A number of scholars including Neil Rosenberg (1993), Peter Narváez (1993), and Jeff Todd Titon (1993; 2012) have produced important theoretical groundwork in the exploration of the revivals of specific music cultures, most notably in the collection of essays titled *Transforming Tradition* (Rosenberg, 1993). As Rosenberg (2014, p. 109; 1993) has suggested, the term *revival* is very much a contested label as the things being revived have never actually ceased to exist but are contrarily ‘made into something different by the revival process; that is, revival kills, maims, or mutates them’ (Rosenberg, 1993, p. 194). The ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin offers a similar view of revivalism stating that ‘to many trained observers...even when people seem to be reviving things, that is, exhuming them and breathing life into them, what they get is something new’ (Slobin in Bithell & Hill, 2014, p. 5). Reflecting on the blues revival of the 1960s Titon (1993) suggests that like all revivals, the blues revival ‘is an imaginative act owing its ongoing activity to a paradox’ in that ‘for activity to take place, people must think there is something stable “out there” called blues (or called folklore, for that matter), which the revival then does things to; it celebrates artists and songs, reissues records, rediscovers artists and makes new records, promotes concerts, writes discographies and histories, and in general interprets the activity called blues music. Rather than telling what blues is, the revival makes it what it is’ (Titon, 1993, p. 237). However, and as the ethnomusicologist Tamara E. Livingston (2014) suggests, the term revival remains useful as it ‘provides a means for identifying and collating musical movements that share certain characteristics’ and gives us ‘a preliminary framework with which to analyze and discuss the ways in which these movements support or depart from the defined usage’ (Livingston, 2014, p. 63). Cultural theorist John Storey (2003) construes the type of folk culture outlined here by Titon more generally as a ‘romantic fantasy, constructed through denial and distortion’ and that it is ‘intended to heal the wounds of the present and safeguard the future by promoting a memory of a past’ that has often all but been forgotten outside of academic circles (Storey, 2003, p. 13). In this conceptualisation of folk culture, Storey draws attention to the possible reason why a

music revival may take place in the first instance and there are several motivations for engaging in revivalist activity.

In the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (2014) propose four general motivational categories for revivalism. In addition to ‘a dissatisfaction with aspects of the modern world’, Bithell and Hill suggest ‘the bolstering of the identity of an ethnic group, minority group, or nation, which is often coupled with a distancing from, or othering of, foreign ethnic or cultural elements’ as a second motivational category. Thirdly, political reasons may be a further motivational factor as ‘revival activities have been employed for both left-wing and right-wing purposes, by both governments and protesters’. Finally, engagement with revivalist practices may be motivated by ‘a practical response to natural or human disasters, as a result of which musical and other cultural practices have been torn away rather than abandoned or evolved’ (Bithell & Hill, 2014, pp. 10-12). As demonstrated in this thesis, each of these motivations can be witnessed in the practices of individuals and groups who contributed to a number of blues music revivals (pp. 116-122) and as Livingston (2014) suggests, *music* revivals ‘provide multiple opportunities to fill basic social *and* individual needs for participants in a way that other cultural realms cannot...because they reach individuals through the senses at the level of emotion and association’ (Livingston, 2014, p. 65, italics in original). It is necessary now to expand on this theoretical framework to include the main components of a music revival and revivalist activities.

In developing her seminal theoretical model of music revivalism, Livingston (1999) identifies a perceived ‘time depth’ as the difference(s) arising from the juxtaposition of an audio recording from the past with a contemporary musical performance in order to make a sociocultural statement about the present. Livingston describes this time depth as the ‘centerpiece’ of all revivals in which revivalists oppose elements of contemporary mainstream culture by aligning themselves ‘with a particular historical lineage, and offer a cultural alternative in which legitimacy is grounded in reference to authenticity and historical fidelity’ (Livingston, 1999, pp. 66, 74). Narváez (1993) also highlights ‘a perceived need for cultural alternatives’ and the ‘authentication of a defined body of

culture in the past' as two of four main prerequisites of a folk revival (Narváez, 1993, p. 244). A music revival then can be broadly characterised as a number of processes performed through music for the purpose of meeting sociocultural aims and Livingston presents her model of a music revival as a 'recipe' defined by the following components:

- an individual or small group of "core revivalists"
- revival informants and/or original sources (e.g. sound recordings)
- a revivalist ideology and discourse
- a group of followers which form the basis of a revivalist community
- revivalist activities (organizations, festivals, competitions)
- non-profit/commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market

(Livingston, 1999, p. 69)

The model Livingston has proposed does not prescribe a time-specific infrastructure, as historian Dick Weissman (2006) does in his analysis of revivalism in US cities during the 1950s and 1960s (Weissman, 2006, pp. 130-132), and neither does it qualify 'craft apprenticeships with master tradition bearers' (Titon, 2012, p. 231) which in the reflections of both Titon (1993) and Rosenberg (1993) implies a revival informant or group of informants must be alive in order for the revival to take place successfully. Livingston's model can therefore be applied as a flexible structure with which to understand revivalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century wherein there is firstly, a proliferation of multimedia sources that pertain to processes of music production, mediation, and consumption that may facilitate and contribute to the revival and transformation of musical traditions, as Beverley Diamond (2017) and Thomas R. Hilder (2017) have recently highlighted in their respective studies of Sámi musical production, and secondly, there are increasingly few potential participants who lived through the jazz age in which the first recordings of blues music were released.

## Methods

### Online Ethnography

In order to provide an accurate picture of the extent to which the blues is linked to its cultural past, it is important to consider the impact of globalisation particularly in the field of communication and how individuals share knowledge and construct cultural identities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Internet provides endless possibilities for self-formation through networked individualism where personalised, increasingly fragmented, and dispersed forms of communities have largely replaced ‘real-world’ forms in rural, urban, and suburban locations (Williams, 2006, pp. 173, 176-177; Tucker, 2017, pp. 13-15). Websites and social media services afford such community formation and remain relatively unexplored in the field of ethnomusicology. However, a number of recent studies have investigated the impact of websites in the field, including how YouTube and music videos may reify cultural stereotypes of Andean peoples in the upper-class imaginary in Lima (Montero-Diaz, 2017) and how such sites and technologies can bridge generational divides amongst indigenous populations, despite being the cause of schisms in the past (Tan, 2017). Such mass cultural technologies have also been seen to become sophisticated enough to become the ‘sites of experience’ to the extent that new relations to the past are constructed with ‘ramifications for the politics of the present’ (Landsberg, 2004, pp. 33, 152). As an integral component in the process of identity construction (Frith, 1996, p. 111), aesthetic engagement with music in such virtual communities is, therefore, a key consideration with consumption practices that impact on the formation and development of cultural identity.

The evolution of the Internet can be viewed as having effectively delinked the concept of a music scene from locality through transcultural flows in which cultural artefacts are received globally and transformed by their reception in new contexts, raising questions that relate to an understanding of globalisation as a process of cultural hybridity or cultural homogeneity. Amateur and professional musicians alike benefit from such technologies through strategic global self-promotion, even if they deride contemporary forms of technology in pursuit and maintenance of an authentic identity. The Internet also

produces its own music constellations that provide ‘ceaselessly mutating attempts at genre reification’ (Brackett, 2016, p. 325) complicating the way in which we understand what we consume as listeners whilst simplifying the process by which we consume it.

The increasing global commodification of popular music artefacts through such technologies may also create a stronger consumer desire for the seemingly ‘uncommercial’ as local communities grow protective of customs, identities, and a sense of place in response to the negative effects of globalisation (Grazian, 2003, pp. 6-7). It is within this struggle that the blues has long held its unique ethnographic and musical position as the ultimate marker of authenticity ‘positioned’ outside of the music industry yet mechanically conveyed through it, seemingly both representing and transcending this paradox. It is argued that in its conceptualisation as a popular music form, a contemporary ethnomusicological approach to locating the blues, in other words *where* it sounds, *what* it sounds, and *how* it sounds must consider the effects of globalisation on popular music culture production, dissemination, and consumption. As one of the world’s largest computer networks, 40,000 people on average are searching through Google every second of each day (Internet Live Stats, 2018), and the web pages that comprise the World Wide Web from which the Google index is drawn are influential in the facilitation of data sharing that is increasingly efficient as the Internet expands in a perpetual state of augmentation.

As Christine Hine (2000) points out ‘if culture and community are not self-evidently located in place, then neither is ethnography’ and to this extent, it must be stated that a number of methods of data collection and analysis adopted in this thesis are partly consistent with a netnographic approach as a form of online ethnography. Netnography as a form of research emerged in the field of consumer and marketing research as a means by which social scientists could more adequately understand social and cultural life in a digital age, and who found that incorporating the Internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) into research design was essential in achieving this aim (Kozinets, 2010, p. 2).

There is a degree of confusion in the social sciences over the distinction between online ethnography and netnography or the distinctiveness of the latter, and some researchers

regard the terms as synonymous (Costello, McDermott & Wallace, 2017, p. 2). Netnography as a portmanteau combining the words ‘Internet’ or ‘network’ with ‘ethnography’, has been described by Robert Kozinets (2015) as a form of ‘participant-observational research based in online hanging-out, download, reflection and connection’ using ‘online and mobile data sources for social data to arrive at ethnographic understandings and representations of online social experience’ (Kozinets, 2015, p. 67). In an online blog posting (Kozinets, 2018) Kozinets makes the distinction that ‘online ethnography and digital ethnography are generic terms for doing any sort of ethnographic work using some sort of online or digital method’, and that in distinction netnography sees online work as complete and offers ‘a specific set of online ethnographic procedures characterized by a particular methodology...’ (Kozinets, 2018). This methodology is underpinned by six steps comprising research planning, entrée, data collection, data analysis, ethical standards and research representation. However, it is clear that many who adopt a netnographic approach rarely utilise or consider all six steps, omitting some and/or adapting others to meet the researcher’s needs (Costello, McDermott & Wallace, 2017, p. 5).

In this project digital communities are *not* the sole focus of study and instead, the digital world is viewed as an extension of what Hine (2000, p. 64) refers to as the ‘real’ world and as a place or source of data that complements other offline research data incorporated in this thesis. Hine (2015) later rejects the distinction between virtual and real worlds and rephrases ‘virtual ethnography’ as ‘ethnography for the Internet’ to acknowledge that the use of the epithet ‘virtual’ was misleading in that it implied such a field was unreal and did not provide coverage for offline domains (Hine, 2015, pp. 23-24, 87). However, whilst this project supports the case for ‘virtual’ worlds to be experienced as ‘real’, the methodological strategy largely guides processes that report on the *connections* between online and offline data. To give an example, the interviews with participants and their associated practices in chapter eight are conducted using online technology and research and so are partly consistent with a netnographic approach (Kozinets, 2010, p. 111). However, such practices are not located exclusively online, rather, they are a digital representation or extension of ‘real’ world practices. To this extent then research is focused on ‘communities online’ in which it is assumed or argued that ‘something

significant can be learned about the wider focal community or culture, and then generalized to the whole' as opposed to research on 'online communities' which 'studies some phenomenon directly relating to online communities and online culture itself' (Kozinets, 2010, pp. 63-64). Online ethnography then plays a valuable supportive role in the research process in what may be referred to as a blended approach that includes data collected offline and online.

### **Live Listening Exercise (LLE)**

As stated in the aims and objectives in the introduction (p. 1), in order to explore the extent of the links between blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its cultural past, it is necessary to consider how the blues and blues-marketed music is interpreted in the present. An objective then is to uncover potential factors that may impact on perceptions of blues music in a postmodern context including the influence of schizophonic practices and explicit expressions of hybridity in popular music artefacts. In achieving this objective light is shed on where the stylistic boundaries of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be perceived to exist in relation to other popular music genres and styles, and how blues music is accordingly valued by popular music listeners (for example, is the blues popular music? is blues-marketed music perceived to be commercially successful? is blues music more authentic than other music styles?). Ultimately, it is suggested that by exploring how popular music artefacts promote blues aesthetics, as pertaining to their distribution via mainstream media channels, a more accurate picture of blues music revivalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be elucidated. In order to achieve these objectives relating to chapter seven, a live listening exercise is developed.

The live listening exercise (LLE) is derived from musicologist Philip Tagg's 'live reception test' method advocated in his studies on popular music (Tagg, 2012, p. 200). The method involves playing a recorded piece of music to a group of participants in a suitable environment and collecting their responses to a set of questions formulated to relate to the recording and relevant topics as part of the exercise. A listening exercise completed live and including a digital online format for the completion of a questionnaire

yields a number of advantages. The provision of a captive audience whose responses may be collected immediately is one advantage and further they require no transcription as in one-to-one conversations and can be performed on many respondents simultaneously (Tagg, 2012, pp. 200-201). The development of the LLE will now be discussed starting with the formulation of the electronic questionnaire used in each session.

An electronic questionnaire, constructed through the cloud-based service provided by SurveyMonkey.com, is deemed preferable to a paper-based format, as responses relating to thematic material and demographic data are compiled and presented online in graphical and statistical formats instantaneously and is, therefore, a more efficient method of collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data. The electronic format also means that the entire questionnaire can not be viewed in full with a quick glance, as is often the case with paper-based formats, and therefore reduces the possibility of bias that may arise from viewing questions in a non-sequential manner. Modifications to both the questionnaire structure and the format of questions contained within, as digitally performed, also eradicate the need for reprinting the questions after such alterations are made. Additionally, the digital format reduces the possibility of errors resulting from illegible handwriting.

The questionnaire (Appendix 3) is conceptualised in three parts concerned with music style, music consumption, and demographic data. The structure incorporates a combination of open and closed questions including multiple choice formats relating to music consumption practices. Five of the eight non-demographic questions are open-ended to allow for a freedom and richness of response, and the development of a coding frame, as detailed in chapter seven, allows for an analysis of such responses. Closed questions incorporated in the questionnaire structure enable a quantitative analysis, deemed appropriate for the synthesis of data related to music consumption such as the amount of time spent using video-hosting sites and the preferred media format(s) of listening. Each question is designed with consideration of the accuracy with which information is encoded, a respondent's possible interpretation of the question, the specificity of each question, and bias (Gray, 2014, pp. 358-360; Gillham, 2008, pp. 25-36). Additionally, questions related to personal data are positioned at the end of the

questionnaire, and where appropriate an ‘other’ option is provided in the structure of closed questions. Following a pilot study (Appendix 2) the initial questionnaire (Appendix 1) is refined in both content and structure. The question ‘can you identify any particular themes within the song and if so, what are they?’ resulted in very few responses and so was replaced with a less specific question ‘describe what you hear’ which generated more detailed responses. It is also important to point out that the initial pilot study was paper-based and in the conversion to an electronic format, it was possible to make responses to certain questions mandatory which negated the possibility of no response. This question was positioned at the beginning of the LLE as it was noted to require a comparatively longer response time than most of the other questions and it is also most closely focused on the audio artefact which is played at the beginning of the exercise. The question ‘how would you describe the mood and or feeling of the music?’ was also found to be ineffective in meeting the objectives of the LLE detailed at the beginning of this section and so was replaced with ‘in your opinion what is the meaning of the song?’ which again generated a broader range of detailed responses. In addition to slight amendments made to the phrasing of questions following the pilot study, it was also deemed necessary to create an additional question ‘in your opinion please describe in your own words what blues music is’ but in order to avoid the potential for bias in subsequent questions, this particular query is positioned towards the end of the questionnaire. As the sole question that makes reference to a specific style, that is blues music, it is considered likely in its primacy to influence a participant’s response to other questions concerning music style in relation to the audio artefact heard, and so is positioned accordingly in the structure of the electronic questionnaire. As detailed in chapter seven, this question is also amended for three sessions in its reference from ‘blues music’ to ‘the blues’ to see if there would be any noticeable semantic difference in the responses offered.

The questions presented in the LLE (specifically questions 1-3) are designed to address the experience of listening to each piece of music heard including the internal context of the perceivers, and in accordance with Peircean thinking (Turino, 2014) enable the identification of: potential signs (question 1); the connections between the signs and what they stood for in terms of music genre and style (questions 3 and 8); and the effects of

these signs on the participants (question 2). Responses to each question are cross-referenced and act as testimony to the identification of signs and the experiences of each participant. Without such, it would be hard to predict what the signs are in each piece of music and how they are operating for each individual given the semiotic density of music. The LLE further pertains to ethnographic investigation as it enables direct observation of the participants as they listen to the music diffused and record their responses. The participants who took part in each LLE will now be discussed followed by an account of the setting for each session.

To avoid the misconceptions of the past and racial bias that featured prominently in blues historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (as detailed in the contextual framework of this thesis) that only listeners from a particular ethnic or cultural background listen to blues-marketed or blues-derived music, no ethnographic information relating to the participants in this study is sought prior to undertaking each LLE. Instead, participant groups are selected using a non-probability purposive sampling method, typical of qualitative research wherein samples are chosen as ‘they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and questions which the researcher wishes to study’ (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013, p. 113), and is based on two related factors that will now be discussed in turn.

The first factor in selecting a sample is that the participants are students enrolled on relevant programmes such as music production, music performance, sound engineering, music and society, and American studies, with HE institutions and providers at an undergraduate level. As such, many are pursuing ambitions to become the music producers of the future or follow a career path in some other capacity in the music industry. The interpretations and responses offered by this collective are therefore an indication of the future, in the very least as music consumers and perhaps to the extent that their decision-making in the future impacts on a vast number of others in professional roles as successful performers and producers of sound. Each LLE is arranged in advance with the associated programme/module leader at a mutually convenient time with no prior engagement with any of the potential participants in the study.

Secondly, age is a more typical criterion for purposive sampling (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013, p. 113) and as undergraduate students the majority of the respondents are aged between 18 and 25 years old and are representative of the largest demographic group of UK music consumers in the digital realm (IFPI, 2016b; Statista, 2018). The group are very much 'plugged-in' to the music industry and so are expected to have a degree of knowledge of music categorisation. The majority of listeners were born after what may be perceived as the last commercial blues music revival of the 1980s and 1990s (p. 6) and consequently are presumed to have little emotional attachment with blues-marketed music in the sense that it is not perceived to have been hugely popular in their years of adolescence. Compared with other participants in this research who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, a period in which prominent acts of revivalism relating to the blues took place, this group are considered less likely to approach blues-marketed music with a sense of nostalgia and in this way are representative of contemporary youth culture in the UK. Through the acquisition of Anglo-American cultural products, the collective can also be considered as representative of an international consumer base which supports the global music industry network.

A listening exercise is performed with seven different groups of participants enrolled on the programmes of study discussed above and there are a total of 61 participants across the seven groups who complete an LLE on one occasion. The group sizes were variable and no prior information regarding the number of participants in each group was obtained as attendance within each group was expected to be variable, largely owing to the timing within the academic year. Qualitative sample sizes are often small, particularly in the social sciences (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013, p. 117) and in this study, access to suitable computing, audio playback, and rooming resources in addition to the availability of groups to participate in the study is to a large extent limited by the programme managers who hold responsibility for such groups. The consideration and trial of online listening exercises and blogs to engage with potential participants in global locations highlighted problematic issues relating to the copyright of audio materials and despite some interest, a general lack of engagement. However, the amount of data generated from each LLE (see Appendix 8) in this case and the appearance of phenomena through the analytical

process described in chapter seven, shows that to an extent, an increased sample size may not have necessarily contributed new evidence.

Completion of the LLE is carried out at the beginning of timetabled laboratory sessions and takes place in an environment in which loudspeakers, deemed suitable for educational purposes, are utilised to diffuse each audio artefact. There is no relationship between the artefact selected in each session and the listening cohort, except for the consideration that as each group completed the LLE there was a consciousness of the number of responses per artefact with the aim that the same ratio would be achieved in conclusion of the seven sessions. In each session, the questionnaire is verbally introduced by myself and features an introductory description displayed at the top in which no reference to blues is communicated in any form to the respondents. Song information including the title and artist is also concealed and not disclosed at any point to the respondents. The use of the Internet for purposes other than completing the online questionnaire was not permitted, and whilst conferring with colleagues was not explicitly stated as impermissible, it was observed that all participants completed the LLE individually without verbally communicating with one another. After the introduction, each group are given 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire within which the audio artefact is played. It was found that all respondents had completed and submitted their responses within this timeframe, as in the pilot study.

## **Interview**

The methods of collecting data presented in chapter eight include the use of face-to-face interviewing in an online format to meet the primary aim which is to address both *how* and *why* a blues revival may be perceived to be active through an analysis of factors that may influence revivalist practices such as emotion and nostalgia. As such, a more mature demographic is encountered as opposed to the young consumers of music who predominately feature in chapter seven (who as a collective did not live through either of the previous blues revivals of the 1950s-1960s and the 1990s and are therefore, far less likely to harbour feelings of nostalgia for such). In order to explore the boundaries of

blues music in online discourse, and the relationship between revivalism and sociocultural experience, the interview method was selected as there was an identified need to communicate with curators of blues music artefacts who have to make decisions on a regular basis about what they believe is blues and what they do not consider to be representative of blues-marketed music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as part of their curatorial role.

Utilising a non-probability purposive sampling method the identification of interviewees was performed by constructing a shortlist of persons engaged with blues music in the UK through a titular search online for blues in print and Internet-based media outlets such as radio, magazines, and music retailers. The individuals selected for interview have received accolades in the form of awards and reviews for their involvement and promotion of blues music in the UK, and/or have gained a lot of experience in the music industry in various curatorial roles. Each interviewee is introduced appropriately in chapter eight but it should be stated here that the participants interviewed can be grouped into an age category of over 60 years old. Key objectives addressed relate to the selection process and criteria for the inclusion of blues performers and their artefacts, and the identification of factors that impact on aesthetic judgement when categorising music. In order to adequately address these specific objectives a unique set of questions was formulated (Appendix 4).

The time, date, and format through which each interview would be conducted were arranged in advance through electronic communication and considered differences across time zones where necessary. Due to the method of interviewing adopted, as explained below, there was no preset duration to the interviews and they took between 40 and 70 minutes to complete in each case. The use of online face-to-face video-conferencing software and the telephone medium proved to be convenient for all parties in each case, and enabled interviews to be conducted with participants residing in areas across the UK, the mainland of continental Europe, and the US which significantly reduced the potential carbon footprint that would otherwise have been left in travelling to such destinations, as recent ethnomusicological studies have highlighted (for example, Grant, 2018). After some initial research and a trial run of a number of video-conferencing platforms including *Skype*, *Appear.in* proved to be most accessible and easy to use with no

requirement for a user to create an account or install software on their device. The process of simply going to the appropriate website, typing a personalised URL and sending the generated link to the interviewee worked efficiently well. However, and for reasons not entirely clear it was not always possible to conduct interviews in this way and so the telephone medium was adopted in such cases. Physical notes were taken during each interview outside of the periphery of the web camera in order to avoid giving any indication of judgement that could potentially influence the responses provided. Each interview was recorded using a portable audio device and transcribed immediately following each event. The subsequent analytical and coding processes are detailed in chapter eight. Finally, I will state the details regarding the interview method adopted.

Considering the aims and objectives stated at the start of this section, the interview method is favoured here as it permits a more in-depth exploration of the perspectives of each informant and an understanding of the associated experiences, opinions, attitudes, and values that underpin the research objectives (Gray, 2014, pp. 383-384). A semi-structured qualitative method to interviewing was pursued as although this was relatively time-consuming to record and analyse, the flexibility offered in using a set of questions as only a guide and improvising often led to a richer and more discursive discussion with additional questions naturally emerging in discourse closely related to the objectives of the project. The semi-structured method is also noted to be aligned with a constructionist epistemological position and a non-positivist view of knowledge to a greater extent than the more positivist structured approach to interviewing (Gray, 2014, pp. 385, 387) and is, therefore, more closely related to the paradigm adopted in this thesis. In the process of conducting each interview, a neutral position was assumed in order to avoid communicating my interpretations of the topics and themes under discussion to each respondent which may have also inadvertently disclosed indications of judgement and therefore influenced an interviewee's response in each instance. Questions were posed in a non-ambiguous manner using a consistent tone and the use of jargon and prejudicial language was avoided.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent from each participant in the project was obtained primarily using a consent form (Appendix 5) reproduced in an online digital format using the SurveyMonkey.com platform. This allowed each participant to simply click on a separate link provided at the beginning of the LLE and enabled consent to be recorded in the same manner as the LLE data. For interviewees, the link to the consent form was provided in electronic mail in the course of making arrangements for each interview to take place. A description of the project is included at the top of the consent form structure and additional information about the nature of the research was either verbally communicated at the beginning of each LLE and additionally at the start of each interview and/or printed in correspondence with interviewees and other participants via email. This included stating the purpose of the research, providing an opportunity for individuals to ask questions, how individuals may withdraw from the study at any time, and communication of issues related to confidentiality in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's research ethics policy and code of practice.

## **Preliminary Studies**

A number of musicological methods were initially adopted in seeking to define the path with which to trace traditions of the past in the present. This included the song family approach in which a relatively simple titular identification of an artefact was followed by aural confirmation of contributions to chosen families through listening. Participation in the *Minglewood Blues / Rollin' and Tumbling* (as identified by Hatch and Millward, 1987), could be traced from Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers recording of *Minglewood Blues* in 1928 to 21<sup>st</sup>-century artefacts recorded by the US southern rock group Gov't Mule in 2000 and the pop singer Cyndi Lauper in 2010. Variants of the *Someday Baby / Trouble No More / Worried Life Blues* family, such as *Someday Baby Blues* by Sleepy John Estes in 1935, could also be found on album recordings by Bob Dylan in 2006 and the hard rock group Clutch in 2007. A more formalist approach to analysis, built on the findings of Titon (1994) and Hatch and Millward (1987) in their respective studies of melodic

structures in blues music, led to the motivic and microtonal analysis of the instrumental studio performances by Stevie Ray Vaughan, a notable figure in the history of blues music who inspired renewed interest in the blues in the 1980s with his recorded and live performances that contributed to the commercial revival of the time (Wald, 2004, p. 249; King, 1997, pp. 283-284). The most commonly employed melodic motif in the study of Delta blues by Hatch and Millward (5, 4, b3, R) was found to occur no less than 29 times in one of Vaughan's most well-known songs *Pride and Joy*. Congruent with the performative approach found in other recordings analysed, iterations of the motif were found to be rhythmically varied with each occurrence. Within the same song, 35 of the 40 microtonal string bends in total were articulated at the third degree of the scale, or G complex in Titon's definition (Titon, 1994, p. 154), and 51 occurrences of the b3-R motif was also established. Additionally, a preliminary study of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century artefact categorised as 'electro-blues' also enabled a number of methods for analysing meaning-making in music to be explored. The selection of an example of contemporary popular music that is explicit in its hybridity, combining electronica with samples derived from *Stop Breakin' Down Blues* as recorded by Robert Johnson in 1937, enabled a range of tools to be tested including Eric F. Clarke's (2005) ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning (see chapter six, pp. 207), Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen's (2010) conceptualisation of technological mediation (see chapter four, p. 158), and the intertextual approach to music analysis (see pp. 59-60), advocated by Serge Lacasse (2000; 2018). Whilst the recording is produced by a white individual, the intersection of technology with the expression of a black cultural identity, as represented in the sample of Robert Johnson, can also be seen to resonate with concepts of Afrofuturism (see pp. 14-16).

## **Limitations & Scope**

The overwhelming majority of participants who took part in the LLE, as detailed in chapter seven identified as white with 5 of the 61 respondents (8.2%) from a non-white background (see Appendix 9.5 for the total ethnic composition of the group). In terms of the interpretation of the meaning of each audio artefact and an understanding of blues

music it would have been interesting to conduct the survey with groups of greater cultural diversity, but nonetheless, the ethnic composition of the sample is representative of that of the UK as a whole and as I have explained (pp. 74-76) there was no necessity to target a specific ethnic group for the purposes of this project, as the groups are instead selected on a basis of their age and enrolment onto relevant educational programmes.

An interpretation of meaning-making and intentionality from the perspective of each artist or group in chapters five and six is largely limited to secondary sources of data such as that found in interviews provided to the press. Whilst there was some success in contacting musicians in Europe and the US, a study that highlights performers of American popular music raises a well-known limitation of the ethnographic approach (Rice, 2014, p. 103). Despite the utilisation of contact information available online and the creation of social media profiles solely for the purpose of contacting specific musicians, very few US-based performers wanted to take part in the research. The abundance of secondary data, however, does enable a degree of corroboration in interpreting a musician's motivation for engagement with the traditions of the past. It should also be clear that what is 'received' in the communication of messages in the distribution of cultural artefacts is the primary focus of this work. An understanding of meaning and perceptions of authenticity is conceived, following Moore (2002), as *ascribed to* and not *inscribed in* the musical materials, and although artist intentionality is raised in chapters five and six, this thesis emphasises interpretative processes as they relate to the interpreter more so than the interpreted.

The audio artefacts referenced throughout this project were recorded from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present, and whilst chapters five, six, and seven are predominately concerned with music recorded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, chapters two and three feature recorded artefacts that were released in the 1920s and 1960s, and in this respect the thesis may be considered as loosely structured in a chronological manner. The audio recordings cited in the chapters two, three, and four are utilised to illustrate the suggested points and arguments in the text, but whilst a number of these songs and performances may be regarded as seminal, they are not given any primacy over other recordings that may have

just as easily been mobilised in each chapter. The examples mentioned in the first half of this thesis are drawn from a variety of sources including: my personal music collection; online music libraries, archives, and catalogues; and secondary citations in documental research. Lyrical transcriptions are aurally extracted from recordings and verified where possible with existing research in print and online formats, and release information is drawn from compendia such as the *All Music Guide to the Blues: The Definitive Guide to the Blues* (Bogdanov, Woodstra, & Erlewine, 2003) and discographies such as *The Great Rock Discography* (Strong, 1999). Examples, such as the Luther Allison song *Freedom*, may be drawn from memory and selected for the reason that they convey a particularly appropriate theme, whilst other examples such as *Marching on Ferguson* by The Nightwatchman are encountered for the first time as part of a thematic or titular search for audio material.

The conceptual framework presented in this thesis permits the identification, exploration and understanding of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, the framework is to some extent a reflection of my own sociocultural and historical position in the way in which artefacts selected for analysis and interpretation may resonate in some way with me but not with others who might undertake similar research. To address this, I must reiterate that I aimed to select recordings and performances that were either unknown to me prior to undertaking this project and/or had no immediate value to me as a casual listener. The methodological justification of the selection of analysis objects at the beginning of this thesis also addresses my position in an attempt to almost neutralise it, most notably in the process of selection for *Cleveland* (chapter six, pp. 205-207). However, I acknowledge that such artefacts are to some extent part of my blues epistemology and that the findings and arguments in this thesis are the result of my intertextual position.

As a white middle-class listener who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s, my understanding of the blues was initially shaped by its interpretation as a popular music style in what is broadly known as blues-rock. As I learnt to also play the guitar during this time I believe that the recordings and live performances of musicians such as Eric Clapton, Mark Knopfler, and David Gilmour had a formative influence on a musicological comprehension of blues. In that I did not grow up as a black working-class listener in a

racially segregated location and time period, I can not reasonably claim that my early *experience* of the blues was directly linked to an expression of African-American culture. As I have shown, the time in which we experience cultural artefacts is crucial to how we interpret and value music and my *position* goes some way to indicating why the formal music features of *Milk Cow Blues* recorded in 1965 by Fred McDowell are reminiscent to me of the recordings by the rock group Alice in Chains in the 1990s, and equally how I can *hear* King Crimson in the music of Béla Bartók. Therefore, as experienced, Eric Clapton may well have ‘invented’ the blues in the mind of a nine-year-old listening to his performance at Knebworth in 1990. It is partly for this reason that the predominant focus of my research and the narrative presented here is directed towards an understanding of the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a period in which my role as a music production educationalist since 2007 has enlightened me to both my intertextual position and to the position of others I have taught. Equally, and as Gilroy (1993, p. 81) has previously highlighted, there are middle-class black American citizens that have as much experience of slavery as white citizens have, but who may be unified through concepts such as cultural memory and diaspora consciousness. The interdisciplinary framework presented here and the methods that underpin it are the result of an attempt to be racially inclusive not exclusive and thus reflect the cultural diversity of the world within which we live.

In researching the traditions of the past, there is also an awareness of the subjectivity involved in documenting the events and artefacts of history and an understanding that it is impossible to completely negate the selective nature of historical study. Yet, I would suggest that the narrative in this thesis and its objects of study are precisely concerned with such subjectivities and conflicting interpretations not only of the past but the present. I understand that in exploring the boundaries of blues I am also pointing the way to a definition of the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but this can not be definitive for the reasons stated above. The framework more accurately opens the doors to achieving a greater shared understanding of how the blues may be interpreted in its meaning in the past and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century from a number of varying perspectives.



## **Chapter 2: Racial Politics and The Blues**

### **Introduction**

The role political factors have played in shaping blues music tradition constitutes the primary focus of this chapter through an elucidation of interpretations of cultural theory as applied to the blues genre and black popular music. The experience of African Americans from 1860 to the present is explored and although such aspects have historically contributed to notions of blues authenticity, the primary purpose here is to focus on the intersection of racial politics and popular music through contextualising blues as a genre within a broader societal context. Through this process, an introductory overview is presented that clarifies the links that exist between the experience of African Americans, racial politics, and music from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States. The work shows how cultural power is bound to the concept of race through examination of the term's historical associations with colonial imperialism and primitivism, and highlights some of the internal and external factors that impact on the experience of African Americans in the United States, and how they may be linked to the past through cultural memory, diaspora, and the legacy of slavery. The network of connections that contribute to the formulation of black identity including an account of how 'blackness' and 'black music' emerged, were discussed, and how they may be exemplified in popular culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is also revealed. Additionally, there is discussion of how the blues has been contextualised within these networks and the manner in which the 'real' blues was invented, sought after, and collected. Evidence presented here underpins the primary argument that contemporary interpretations of the blues genre have been constrained by such ideological forces, whilst processual flows of globalisation contrarily enable a reimagining of the blues.

The qualitative data, which provides the foundation for the inductive arguments contained within this chapter, is primarily comprised of secondary sources in print and digitised media formats from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, and recorded music and transcriptions of song lyrics published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to 2016. A longitudinal

study of African-American culture requires a number of strategies of enquiry and is mostly concerned with ethnographic, ethnomusicological, and cultural anthropological approaches, whilst the emergent themes that constitute the headings contained herein are the result of a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis. The key concepts and theories that comprise the framework for this work are predominately drawn from two primary areas that may be referred to as black cultural studies and popular music historiography (see chapter one, pp. 47-51). There can be no doubt that there is a relationship between blackness and music defined as black music and so this chapter mobilises the scholarly work on black culture in order to gauge the extent of this relationship and the links that may exist between blues, blackness, and lived experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The use of song lyrics transcribed from audio recordings is reflective of the approach adopted by ethnomusicologists such as David Evans (1982), Paul Oliver (1990), and Jeff Todd Titon (1994) in their studies of narrative themes in blues music and blues culture, but is also reflective of the approach taken by revisionist scholars including Elijah Wald (2004). Wald's (2004) main overriding point in focusing on recorded music popular with black audiences up to 1970 is that the blues as black popular music disappeared as the 'authentic' bluesman character depicted by white folklorists and record collectors most prominently in the profile of Robert Johnson and which was always a minority taste, prevailed in discourse on the blues. This reimagining of the blues is detailed in Marybeth Hamilton's (2009) exploration of blues history which focuses on white figures obsessed with racial difference and primitivism that led to the 'birth' of the Delta blues. Such obsessions also emerge in the titular study of blues between 1850 and 1920 by Peter Muir (2010) in which the distinctions between popular music and folk music largely exemplify notions of racial difference. In the later sections of this work, such revisionist blues historiography is drawn upon and contextualised within the concepts of black culture in order to demonstrate the dichotomous relationship of the blues and cultural identity, a relationship which is deemed crucial to a contemporary understanding of blues music culture.

## A Brief Historical Overview of Racial Politics in America

By 1860, the last year of peace, one of every seven Americans would belong to another. Four million men, women, and children were slaves. More than three million of them worked the fields of the Deep South . . .

(Ward, Burns & Burns, 1992, p. 12)

To suggest that racial and diaspora politics have largely defined the African-American experience in the United States may seem like a superfluous statement but it is difficult to find a more wholly appropriate way with which to open this chapter. For five centuries prior to the commencement of the American Civil War in 1861, Africans were enslaved by traders from continents that comprised Old World and New World ecozones as part of the Atlantic slave trade triangle and were essentially viewed as nothing more than cargo, transported, auctioned and ‘consumed’ like the very products they were enslaved to cultivate such as sugar and tobacco. There is little wonder why in the 19<sup>th</sup> century those African Americans ‘lucky’ enough to have either been in a position to purchase their freedom or born to a mother who was already free, as in the case of Boston settler David Walker, fought for the abolition of such practices and for the freedom of others as witnessed in *Walker’s Appeal* published in 1829:

I speak Americans for your good. We must and shall be free I say, in spite of you. You may do your best to keep us in wretchedness and misery, to enrich you and your children; but God will deliver us from under you. And woe, woe, will be to you if we have to obtain our freedom by fighting.

(Lawler & Schaefer, 2005, p. 251)

Despite calls from the Mayor of Savannah to both arrest Walker and outlaw the pamphlet, as it was already illegal in Georgia to teach a slave to read, Boston’s mayor refused. The minority that were opposed to slavery, collectively known as the abolitionists, consisted of key figures such as Frederick Douglas who after gaining freedom published his own anti-slavery journal *North Star* from 1847, and William Lloyd Garrison who as white

man had campaigned for almost four decades for an end to slavery and whose long-running newspaper, in circulation for 35 years from 1831, *The Liberator* proved influential to both African-American subscribers including Douglas, and white abolitionists. Following the slave uprising led by Nat Turner in Virginia of 1831 resulting in the death of 57 whites, tensions between the north and south increased as Southerners accused northern abolitionists of inciting violence, and with increased vehemence began to stress the positive relationships between races in an attempt to suppress the voices of those opposed to slavery. From here continuous arguments over free speech increasingly pivoted on differences over slavery, and pro-slavery supporters asserted their control through strengthening laws against teaching slaves to read, banning free blacks from reading anti-slavery literature including *The Liberator* (punishment for committing such an offence was at least twenty lashes), abolitionist buildings were burned down, and Garrison was nearly lynched. As the severity of the situation increased with the political argument geographically expanding with the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, large-scale violence ensued most notably in 'Bleeding Kansas' as over 200 men were killed in a series of conflicts along the Missouri border. In 1857, the African-American slave Dred Scott notably sued for freedom on the grounds he had lived on the free soil of Missouri for several years, but was turned down as according to Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's reading of the Constitution neither a slave or a slave's descendants could ever be classed as American citizens, and so had no rights a white man was bound to respect, essentially putting an end to Scott's legal battle for freedom that had commenced a decade earlier. As the Civil War broke out on 12 April 1861, both Union and Confederate sides were comprised of a mixture of northerners and southerners who chose sides depending not only on their individual stance on slavery but also on economic factors and what one might be perceived to gain from fighting or not, as the following quotation by Confederate soldier Sam Watkins suggests:

A law was made by the Confederate States Congress about this time allowing every person who owned twenty Negroes to go home. It gave us the blues; we wanted twenty Negroes. Negro property suddenly became very valuable, and there was raised the howl of 'rich man's war, poor man's fight' (Leidner, 2014, p. 4).

In fact, there was little to no economic change for free persons after the war and despite numerous promises of full citizenship for both black and white American people through the passing of the Reconstruction Amendments, the hopes of many African Americans were dashed as everyone desperately sought new prosperity. This factor contributed to the reimposition of white supremacy throughout the Confederate states and essentially meant that black citizens would need to wait another century before freedom could be fully realised.

In essence the experience of southern African Americans in the decades following the conclusion of the war from 1865 into the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be seen to be little different to the conditions experienced in the antebellum era; Black Code laws passed in 1865 and 1866 restricted the freedom and economic status of southern blacks and heavy enforcement of racial segregation was emphasised with the passing of Jim Crow laws, a period within which lynching became a white spectator sport as an estimated 3,220 blacks were lynched in the South between 1880 and 1930 (Gussow, 2002, p. 45). Also indicative of this period was the convict leasing system which was expanded at the end of the war and characterised as the most exploitative labour system known in American history, as convicts were leased out to work on sugar and cotton plantations, coal mines, and sawmills. One southern employer highlighted the benefit of convict leasing to novelist and Jim Crow opponent George Washington Cable in 1883, suggesting that 'before the war, we owned the negroes...if a man had a good negro, he could afford to keep him...but these convicts, we don't own 'em. One dies, get another' (Mancini, 1996, p. 3).

Not only were black citizens being financially exploited and worked to death by southern lessees and employers, they were also the subject of ridicule and humiliation through racial stereotypes expressed in minstrelsy and coon songs, a popular fad within which whites could commit sins such as stealing, gambling, evading authority, and eating and drinking too much through song, whilst identifying them as traits of a perceived inferior race. The inferiority of black citizens in the minds of southern whites can also be found in the actions of white relief workers following the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, after which and unlike white residents, blacks were not allowed to leave areas of devastation and were instead bound to the plantation or space where they were ‘employed’. The inequality in the treatment of black citizens by relief workers is expressed in *High Water Everywhere* recorded by Charley Patton in 1929:

Lord the whole round country, lord creek water is overflowed  
Lord the whole round country, man, is overflowed  
(Spoken: you know, I can’t stay here, I’m bound to go where it’s high  
boy.)  
I would go to the hill country, but they got me barred

The music of Charley Patton has been noted by blues writers such as David Evans (2006; 2018) to include commentaries on a number of racial issues such as white power structures in *Tom Rushen Blues* (1929) and *High Sheriff Blues* (1934), struggles against white landowners and potential for migration out of the Jim Crow South as expressed in *Mississippi Boweavil Blues* (1929), and black assertion in the face of white oppression during the Great Migration as in *Pony Blues* (1929). It is unsurprising that social mobility became a key lyrical theme within African-American music (Forman, 2012; Neal, 2014; Kitwana, 2002). The economic disadvantages and racial discrimination experienced by black families living in the South, the result of inequalities in the sharecropping system, the mechanisation of farming processes, and the unskilled jobs black workers would often be forced to take on due to segregation laws, caused millions of African Americans to move to the urban areas of the North as part of the Great Migration. This was enabled as a result of restrictions on immigration that came into

force around the time of WWI through the Immigration Act 1917 forcing northern employers to finally consider recruiting African Americans as inexpensive labour instead of southern and eastern Europeans. Despite the economic hope offered by northwards migration, the racial mistreatment of black citizens continued as segregation policies encouraged discrimination and the effects of the Great Depression resulted in fewer jobs for black workers, especially as some northern employers preferred to recruit poor white citizens. As a result, by the end of this period, a disproportionate number of African Americans were reliant on Social Security relief. After WWII and the passing of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, African-American interest in politics grew and whilst blues songs about subsequent presidents proved to be comparatively scarce, evidence blues and gospel historian Guido Van Rijn (2004) suggests shows the failure of both Truman and Eisenhower to inspire the African-American community, a number of blues musicians recorded political songs around this time including J.B. Lenoir, Arthur Crudup, Leadbelly, John Lee Hooker, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Big Bill Broonzy.

Overturing the separate but equal doctrine established in the judicial outcome of *Plessy v Ferguson* in 1896 in which segregation was upheld as constitutional as long as segregated facilities were of equal quality, the case of *Brown V Board of Education Topeka* (1954) resulted in the Supreme Court ruling that desegregation in public schools was unconstitutional and effectively paved the way for racial integration in schools across America. Whilst *de facto* segregation would still exist as determined by residential patterns, the outcome of the case proved to be a landmark in the Civil Rights movement. The period between 1954 and 1971 is characterised by the actions of individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks with organisations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) playing key roles in the Civil Rights movement in America which would eventually lead to widespread desegregation and constitutional reform with the passing of the Civil Rights Act (1964). Desegregation protests, mass sit-ins, and Freedom Rides into areas of segregation in the South, challenged the structures of racial inequality and sought to enforce Supreme Court rulings where unconstitutional policies remained unopposed. The actions and achievement of what has also been referred to as the Black Consciousness

movement led to the judgment that discrimination based on race, religion, sex, and national origin was unlawful. The 1960s saw a rise in politically charged music contributing to both the Civil Rights movement and as part of an artistic reaction to the increasing involvement of American troops in the Vietnam War. The collective identity and action of the Civil Rights movement can be heard in the Freedom Songs with which they spoke with one voice as in the gospel song *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around*:

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In performances of this song the word 'nobody' would be replaced in each verse with a prominent segregationist or racist public figure demonstrating a pre-planned approach to gospel performance wherein groups would know which words would be sung where, and in what order each verse would be performed whilst singing in unison. The collective nature of such songs was perceived to have contrasted with the individualistic approach of the blues singer and Black Power activist Maulana Karenga even described the blues as 'counter-revolutionary by virtue of its apparent endorsement of passivity, quiescence and suffering' (Gilroy, 2002, p. 236). However, American blues performers still 'spoke out' in recordings about injustice and discrimination, even as individuals, as J.B. Lenoir recounts in *Alabama Blues*:

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Around the same time Nina Simone had recorded *Strange Fruit*, originally sung by Billie Holiday in 1939 and written by the Jewish American songwriter and school teacher Abel Meeropol, to also draw upon the violent struggles of the past in order to face the political and social challenges of the time:

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Whilst such songs were unlikely to be heard during protest actions, the performers of such articulated the common goal in advocating an end to the violence towards black Americans and shared no less the concerns and hopes of the protestors through recordings and live performances. It is also worth stating here, as illustrated in the introduction (p. 14), that the contemporary groundwork for Afrofuturism also started to take on additional prominence in this period, as African Americans reimagined a future through art, literature, and music that encapsulated such goals and themes of freedom (for a discussion of the intersection of sound technology and race, see chapter four).

This section has provided an introductory overview to the links that exist between the experience of African Americans, racial politics and music from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, but in order to present a more comprehensive understanding of these relationships with the aim to provide a contemporary interpretation, aspects of racialisation need to be explored in more depth.

## **Orientalism, Power & Difference**

The rise of a racist ideology in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, based on perceptions of social difference and comprised of predominantly biological features such as skin, hair, and eye colour that were believed to determine culture, temperament, and the intellectual and physical capacities of a human, constituted a hierarchal presentation of the world as part of the Enlightenment period within which white Europeans were viewed by theorists and philosophers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant as existing at the apex of the structural classification based on race. Naturalist conceptions of race grew in the following centuries and were most notably manifested in the race laws of Hitler's Germany in the 1930s. Whilst developments in biological sciences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to a consensus among geneticists and anthropologists that physical differences were not correlated to genetic variation among humans, the concept remains in circulation not only in informal biological classification but as a component of collective identity, legitimised through association with the political Black Power movement of the 1960s and utilised in direct opposition to the usage of the term during the age of European imperialism to subvert the non-European 'Other'. Subsequently, racism is deeply embedded within the practices and discourses of Western societies, and the idea of racialisation (pp. 23-27) founded on the argument that race is a social construction emerged from the historical use of the term 'race' as a way of referring to the ideology of such without the implication of racist connotations. The deep implantation of perceptions of difference in Western society over hundreds of years has led to the application of a string of binary oppositions in the way in which the non-European 'Other' and more specifically black popular culture has been subjectively

viewed, an ‘us and them’ view of the world that brings with it a range of representational dichotomies such as black/white, civilised/primitive, good/bad, and authentic/inauthentic (Haynes, 2013; Hamilton, 2016; Miller, 2010).

Cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall (1996) have pointed out how difference continues to be invoked by anthropologists in the pluralistic tendencies of postmodernist thought through a fascination with sexual, cultural, racial, and ethnic differences (Hall, 1996, p. 470), and as ethnomusicologist Kofi Agawu (2003) asserts ‘by constructing phenomena, objects or people as “different” one stakes a claim to power over them’ (Agawu, 2003, p. 220). Power is central to the concept of Orientalism developed by Edward Said (1978) in which he identified an antithesis between the Orient and the Occident which refers to the manner in which Western discourses of power have both constructed an Orient and ultimately how control and a sense of difference is maintained through the positional superiority of the West, suggesting that it has ‘less to do with the Orient than it does with “our” world’ (Said, 1978, p. 12). In reducing the ‘Other’ to a subordinate, any associated anxiety or fear of loss of power on the part of the dominating power is effectively eradicated and within the global context to which Orientalism refers, this control is achieved through the distribution of texts and practices at the core of which rest European superiority, racism, and imperialism.

In popular culture, power and its articulation through difference has been asserted through the manner in which black and minority populations are portrayed through central representational forms of popular Western culture such as the television. Films have been particularly noted for the portrayal of racial stereotypes derived from plantation and slave images (Bogle, 1973), and it was not until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that black families and characters began to appear in central roles in TV shows produced in the UK and America. The intention to portray black people in forms of media through positive images may also be complicated by an essentialist and homogenising understanding of ethnic identity that incorrectly assumes all black people have essential qualities in common, whilst the likelihood of reaching a consensus on what constitutes a positive image in the first instance is also low. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, multimedia formats such as YouTube can be perceived to perpetuate heavily romanticised or negative

stereotypical representations of minority populations, cementing and/or altering notions of genre and music style (for example, see Montero-Diaz, 2017, and pp. 268-270 in chapter seven).

This section has demonstrated how cultural power is bound to the concept of race through the term's historical associations with colonial imperialism and primitivism, and the sense of difference employed in utilising the term in cultural practices that has enabled and continues to enable individuals, groups, nations, and continents to obtain power locally, nationally, and globally. Contextualising race and racism historically shows how the West and white Europeans have achieved the majority share of power through a continuous struggle with the non-European 'Other' and so the next section addresses how the 'Other' and more specifically black inhabitants of the UK and USA have combated the dynamics of this power struggle in the formation of a strong cultural identity and how this has been shaped by history through cultural memory, diaspora, and a dual-consciousness that facilitates empowerment.

## **Cultural Memory, Identity & Diaspora**

Every act of perception carries implicit baggage from a history of habits of constructing the world. It should not seem strange at all...that not all of us notice hair types as markers of distinction among people (Agawu, 2003, p. 236).

The ongoing development of internalised cognitive processes that are essentially metacognitive, refers to the ability to control one's own thoughts, and are stimulated through social interactions and the resultant processing of this knowledge that constitutes social cognition. Through the acquisition, encoding and retrieval of information, which collectively constitute memory, an individual's perception of the social world is shaped through how one perceives one's self, other people, and one's interactions with other people. The development of cognitive structures or social schemas referred to by Agawu as 'implicit baggage', are thus based on past experience and afford a relatively efficient way of categorising new information without the requirement to build new internalised

structures with each social encounter. It is the internal processing of information through consciousness and self-consciousness in social cognition that constitutes identity and therefore the concept of identity is not fixed but continually shaped by the convergences of age, class, gender, race, and nation. The awareness of a range of established identity structures grew from the 1960s and led to the politicisation of the concept through the repeated construction, defence, and attempted dismantling of identities.

The expression of identity exhibited by African Americans during the period of the Civil Rights movement was effectively used as a means of combating a legacy of racism in which the power struggle between white and black citizens in the South had developed. This collective sense of identity empowered individuals to take action against both the injustices of the past and the racialised power structures of the present. The Black Power movement emphasised identity through its basis in ideologies such as pan-Africanism, and Afrocentrism which centralised African culture and behaviour in, for example, the projects of activist Ron Karenga that included the celebration of *Kwanzaa*, devised to honour African heritage in African-American culture and built on a black value system *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles). In the first and last principles called *Umoja* (Unity) and *Imani* (Faith) there is reference to both ‘race’ and the ‘righteousness and victory of our struggle’ respectively (Karenga, 1995, p. 40), demonstrating both how a sense of empowerment enabled the legitimacy of the word ‘race’, and the perpetual nature of the power balance indicated in the words ‘our struggle’ evoking its historical connotations. By the late 1960s, the ‘message’ of the Civil Rights movement was changing as chants of freedom were replaced with chants of black power, indicating how the traditions of the past linked to the experience of slaves on US soil, and African traditions such as the Swahili theory of *Kawaida* upon which Karenga based his work, were powerfully and actively remembered which raises the matter of diaspora identity.

In the context of this chapter, diaspora may be defined as the global dispersion of African populations, predominantly to the West, that share a collective cultural and ethnic identity. The negative effects of the process of dispersal are countered through expressions of diaspora identity which focus on ‘the social dynamics of remembrance and

commemoration' (Gilroy, 2002, p. 318) adding significant weight to the broad concept of cultural memory that has become key to 'our understanding of how individuals construct everyday social reality and the sociocultural narratives that underpin this' (Bennett & Rogers, 2016, p. 38). However, there may be limits to the collectiveness of cultural identity formation of Africans of relatively recent origin, as cultural theorist and historian Paul Gilroy (1993) suggests black post-World War II communities may be unified 'more by the experience of migration than by the memory of slavery and the residues of plantation society' (Gilroy, 1993, p. 81). In fact it is worth noting here that whilst diaspora is closely associated with the displacement of ancestral populations through the Atlantic slave trade, voluntary migration from Africa has also played a part in the African diaspora as populations have relocated not only to escape political conflicts or civil war but also in search of economic prosperity or advancement, driven by a lack of political freedoms and/or low salaries. Writing in the late 1960s and frustrated with the constant portrayal of black citizens as victims, African-American jazz critic and novelist Albert Murray (1990) purported that in light of the 'totalitarian nature of tribal life' the natives of Africa from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards 'could hardly have regarded Africa as the stronghold of individual freedom and limitless opportunity' suggesting the view that 'slave runners simply landed their ships and overpowered the helpless natives at will' was inaccurate and that despite their subsequent objectification 'the personal and social intercourse among slaves was so fabulous in the richness of its human fellowship, humour, esthetic inventiveness and high spirits' that slave owners could only 'pretend to shrug it off as childishness' (Murray, 1990, pp. 17-18, 62). Even within Murray's romanticised view of slavery in which Africans are portrayed to have almost left their homeland on their own terms, there are still negative resultant effects of voluntary migration at any point in time in, for example, the division and dispersion of family members. The expression of cultural identity, cultural memory and diaspora can be observed in the song *Freedom* by African-American blues musician Luther Allison:

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The lyrical content and title of *Freedom* clearly draw on the struggles of the past, chiefly those of the Civil Rights era, (in which Allison built his reputation as a blues performer making his debut recordings in the mid-to-late 1960s), to reflect on political concerns of the present in South Africa and simultaneously expressing a familiar sense of frustration and degree of hopelessness that characterised earlier power struggles. The song demonstrates the collective consciousness of the diaspora through both the lyrical content and African instruments such as a kalimba and congas utilised prominently at the beginning of the recording to provide an aesthetic that emphasises a distinct cultural identity (Ramnarine, 2007).

The global dimensions of the diaspora are also evident in Allison's movements since he was born on 17 August 1939 on a farm near Mayflower, Arkansas. In 1951 Allison's parents took Luther, and two of his brothers, from the rural home to live in Chicago, where Allison became familiar with McKinley Morganfield, aka Muddy Waters through

attending the same high school as Morganfield's son. Inspired by the performances of Freddie King and Otis Rush, Allison worked on developing his guitar technique and gradually he began to get noticed taking over King's residency at Walton's Corner in 1963. Unfortunately for Allison nothing fruitful came from either his debut recordings for CBS which were scrapped or his subsequent endeavours to make further recordings with labels such as Chess and Vee-Jay. In 1967 Allison moved to Peoria, Illinois where he worked for a tractor company, a steel foundry, and a bakery as he tried to maintain a performance schedule in Chicago:

I had all three jobs, drove back to Chicago to the 1815 Club after 11:30....165, 170 miles from Peoria to Chicago. I'd get off at four o'clock and be back in Peoria to go to work at three in the afternoon (Luther Allison, cited in Slaven & Russell, 1995, p. 521).

After a year performing in California from 1968 earning \$15 a night, Allison eventually recorded his first album *Love Me Mama* with Delmark in 1969 and continued to tour nationally releasing a further three albums with Gordy Records during the 1970s. Towards the end of the decade, and frustrated with a lack of interest from major record companies in America, Allison began to tour abroad in Europe where his performances were received enthusiastically, so much so that he decided to relocate to France in 1980 recording numerous live and studio performances including the album *Rich Man* produced in Germany, whilst intermittently returning to perform to US audiences up until his death in 1997. This short biographical account highlights the economic factor in the geographical movement of Allison, and through live performances and recordings, he was able to express his cultural identity formed through experience and the manner in which he handled those experiences. As sociomusicologist Simon Frith (1996) points out in his affirmation of the link between identity and music, 'identity is not a thing but a process - an experiential process which is most vividly grasped as music' and further that 'music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective' (Frith, 1996, p. 110). Whilst racial identity has largely been the subject of this section, the effects of the African diaspora and the

historical context within which it takes place raises questions concerning how other forms of identity specifically nationalism coexist within the senses of those individuals who have either been dispersed or who have developed a consciousness through social cognition of either ancestral displacement or through a shared cultural memory with non-ancestral peoples.

## **Nationalism, Transnationalism & Diaspora**

Nationalism encourages the cohesion of unrelated communities through the invoking of the belief that groups of people are in fact related as they share common goals, as expressed in the adoration of a nation, that generate a sense of connectedness and national identity. Sociologist Anthony D. Smith (1991) characterises the foundations of national identity in Western nations as ‘common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions’, whilst suggesting that in Eastern Europe and Asia national identity is prevalently generated through blood relations within a ‘community of common descent’ (Smith, 1991, p. 11). The implication in such a distinction is that foreign integration into Eastern European and Asian countries would be near impossible, whereas an adoption of Western values would enable foreigners to be accepted as veritable members in Western countries. However, this eventuality of the recognition of non-Western immigrants as ‘true members’ in Western nations is, as indicated in this chapter, fraught with complications brought about by the legacy of slavery through cultural memory, the Western concepts of race, and the associated power struggles that are collectively interconnected historically in the fabric of Western society. Such complications lead to a view that nationalism is to some extent superficial as Hall (1992) states national cultures ‘are cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences, and “unified” only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power’ (Hall, 1992, p. 297). Cultural nationalism has historically posed a number of challenges to non-Western immigrants to Western nations such as the UK wherein the effects of decolonisation from around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the arrival of migrants in the 1950s from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent, and the economic decline in the 1970s led to the emergence of anti-immigration rhetoric

that was both reflected in the politics of the period notably in the ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech of 1968 by Birmingham-born Member of Parliament Enoch Powell, and underlined in the paratext to the new feelings of nationalism that were created through participation in the Falklands War in 1982. Arguably, questions of race are less concerned with nationalism in the US as such questions were raised at the inception of a country largely characterised by and built on immigration, as opposed to questions posed at a time when a relatively homogeneous white population was ‘disrupted’ by immigrants to Britain. In keeping strong ties with a homeland whilst occupying a ‘homespace’ or sense of belonging within another country (Joseph, 2014, p. 4), the distinction between diaspora and transnationalism appears to be slight but immigrant groups of both diaspora and/or transnational identity face similar challenges when settling in home spaces within Western nations and such challenges are perpetual in nature. Cultural identity and communication scholars Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram (2009) highlight this in their study on members of the Indian diaspora’s re-examination of their acculturation status after the events of 9/11. Bhatia and Ram suggest that the outcome of acculturation does not solely rest with the individual but also largely depends on external forces, as ‘even when individual immigrants claim to have integrated themselves into the mainstream host culture, structural and political contexts conspire to combat their assumptions’ (Bhatia & Ram, 2009, p. 147). Themes of integration and acceptance are primary goals in the experiences of those belonging to the African diaspora as individuals and collective groups seek to achieve both aims in creating a home space, as Mississippian musician Little Milton sings in *We’re Gonna Make It* recorded in 1965:

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When Little Milton refers to ‘making it’ during the opening of the second verse this could be interpreted on several levels, there is the figurative interpretation that black American citizens would collectively achieve the aims of the Civil Rights movement, but there is also the literal interpretation that a home or home space will be made. The implication is that African Americans may never be able to call the US their home due to either a lack of national acceptance of those belonging to the African diaspora, emphasising the internal divisions that Hall refers to, or that the homeland is Africa and a sense of belonging could have been realised if it were not for the historical displacement and dispersion of African people.

In addition to spatial dislocation, sentimentality for an imagined home arises through temporal dislocation as individuals rely on memories of ‘the past’ which are associated with a home inaccessible in the present and so there is continuous discontinuity between the past and the present. A marker of identity for members of the African diaspora is thus created in the attention drawn to a ‘remembered homeland’ in a distant time and/or space and sustained and reimagined for new generations and contemporary purposes. This process is portrayed prominently in author Alex Haley’s 1976 novel *Roots* (Haley, 1976) and the Golden Globe and multiple Emmy Award-winning 1977 televised miniseries *Roots* (1977) that follow the life story of one of Haley’s ancestors Kunta Kinte. The protagonist in this narrative is captured and enslaved in West Africa and taken to America where his African roots are continuously referenced in the passing of stories and traditional meanings between a number of generational descendants from the period of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century up to the conclusion of the Civil War, provoking African-American readers and/or viewers to consider their own genealogy.

Diasporic cultural forms and the maintenance of diaspora networks can collectively be seen as a type of defence mechanism to the external forces that may be applied to identity through nationalist pressures. In Janelle Joseph’s (2014) study on the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Canada, Joseph found that recreational cricket fandom and associated practices including tourism, dancing, and socialising were ‘significant to the production of a cultural heritage experience’ and in which cricket clubs transcended their sporting functions through permitting black members and fans to express themselves freely in the

rhizomatic nature of black and Caribbean cultural forms such as traditional Caribbean foods and calypso music that provided a sense of comfort, binding communities more so than the 'bonds of a biological blackness or an homogenous ethnic culture' (Joseph, 2014, pp. 5, 9). This indicates that engagement in the diaspora in its communal type is not necessarily restricted to only black individuals, as participation in such communities from other ethnic groups does not weaken the black diaspora networks, as emphasis is placed on the dissemination of the black cultural forms. However, the extent to which any individual may engage in the cultural memory pathways of the diaspora network is dependent on the existence of actual memories to share, as Joseph elucidates in reflecting upon such obstacles:

Unfortunately, I could not answer many of his detailed questions about the location of residence of my extended family or the name of the store my mother's family had owned. I failed this test of my Antiguanness, locating me firmly outside of the Caribbean and solely in the diaspora....Where no direct relationship was found, they shared stories and nostalgic memories of their homelands and of West Indies international cricket success of decades past. I had no such memories to share (Joseph, 2014, p. 9).

In the sporting context of Joseph's study, memories may be generated through events and stories associated with cricket matches and the cultural forms that accompany such occasions but the study also highlights the generational challenges in engaging with diaspora communities, underscoring what is perceived as a need to continually 'remember' and 'remake' a home space in order to maintain a diaspora identity (see chapter three for further discussion of a sense of place). Whilst shared claims to identity can be seen to strengthen diasporic networks, they also demarcate such identities from others, and it is this 'vector of difference or rupture' as Hall puts it (Hall, 1990, p. 226) to which attention will now be drawn.

As indicated earlier, identities as a result of social cognition are neither fixed nor stable and the fluidity of cultural identity formation and the manner in which individuals

subscribe to cultural identities in an effort to meet expectations and achieve goals affirm Hall's claims that cultural identity is a 'positioning', and as such cultural identity is politically situated. The notion of double consciousness, developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century work of black American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, as found in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois, 1996), described the difficulty that those belonging to the black diaspora faced in an oppressive environment that complicated how diasporic communities operated in the society within which they were located. As a result, cultural identity shifted not only with how black people saw themselves but also congruently with how black individuals perceived their own self through racist eyes. In Hall's (1996) view the aim of the struggle, in which tension results from the expression of nationalist and diaspora identity and which externally reflects the internal conflict of black individuals, is to replace the 'or' within the binary 'black or British' with the potentiality or the possibility of an 'and' (Hall, 1996, p. 475). In the US during the late 1950s, an African-American performer named Chuck Berry could be heard singing about yearning for his home space after a trip to Australia:

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*Back in the U.S.A* clearly contributes to a sense of nationalism through praise of its commodities, although the motivation behind emphasising such sentiment in light of the popularity of Berry's music at the time with young white audiences is unclear, and from a cynical point of view might have been written and recorded solely for commercial gain. Berry also expressed the black diaspora identity in performing pieces such as the calypso folk song *Jamaica Farewell*:

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Through expression of the cultural form of music in recordings and live performances such as the aforementioned, Berry can be heard to be both maintaining the black diaspora identity and drawing attention to a sense of nationalism. The point here is that the manner in which individuals in the media spotlight may variably identify throughout their careers brings the tension between expressions of diaspora identity and nationalism into sharp focus.

Whilst this section has focused on how diasporas and diaspora identities are maintained, expressed in cultural forms and understood within the context of nationalism, whilst also coexisting with such within potential power struggles internationally, in order to obtain a contemporary understanding of the fluidity of cultural identity, it is important to look at the experience of the African-American community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **African-American Experience Today**

Despite the global efforts to combat and eradicate racism that stemmed from the ideological beliefs, attitudes, and actions of the colonial and imperial age, the fact that racism still exists in the world today and is manifest in various ways is evident in the attention drawn by cultural theorists such as George Lipsitz (2011), Ronald E. Hall (2015), and Portia K. Maulsby (2017) to structural barriers to social mobility which African Americans have encountered since and despite progress made in the Civil Rights era. Whilst it is important to recognise that internal barriers also impact on social mobility, it is racism as manifested in external forces that will be predominately addressed in this section.

As previously alluded to, sporting events and the intensity of competition often give rise to tensions related to identity between both competitors and spectators that are globally transmitted through broadcast media channels. In this way, such rivalries only appear to be emphasised both in the intrinsic nature of broadcasting and extrinsically in the amount of coverage given to an event and the manner in which sporting rivals are portrayed, particularly in the preceding weeks and months leading up to an event, as typified in televised pay-per-view boxing bouts. It should then also come as no surprise that sporting occasions are some of the first events to enter our consciousness when discussing examples of 21<sup>st</sup>-century racism.

British Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton experienced what shall be referred to as direct racism when taunted by a group of spectators at a test session in preparation for the Spanish Grand Prix in 2008. The group of spectators used blackface make-up and wore T-shirts that said 'Hamilton's Family', and a similar act of minstrelsy was repeated in 2009 by at least one attendee spotted in the crowd (Mail Online, 2017). These actions openly and directly reflected the racist ideology exuded in the forms of entertainment associated with the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in each case used in an attempt to distract Hamilton in his then rivalry with the Spanish driver Fernando Alonso. In response to a history of overt racism expressed towards non-white players from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that has included and continues to include 'monkey chanting' (Sky Sports, 2017), the international governing body of football FIFA were forced to implement

tougher sanctions for teams that included expulsion from tournaments and league relegation in 2013 (BBC Sport, 2017). These sporting examples further demonstrate how friction can be created via feelings of nationalism or patronage of a particular team in order to suppress black identity.

In sport, the motivation behind the use of overt racism is most often as part of an attempt to unsettle the opposing team or individual so that the other wins, but when racist gestures appear in art forms such as music, as in the example of American metal singer Phillip Anselmo gesturing a Nazi salute and shouting ‘white power’ during the end of a concert at the beginning of last year (Guardian, 2017), there appears to be no other explanation for such action other than perhaps to draw attention to the power struggles that characterise the term race and in doing so attempt to ‘regain’ power. A feeling that ‘white control’ had been diminished by the actions of the Black Lives Matter movement given prominent media coverage particularly in the preceding year may have fuelled such an action. However, this would be a speculative suggestion and the singer himself has provided no rationale in interviews given to the media and so this ‘error of judgement’ can solely be interpreted as an offensive racist outburst.

In his collection of essays titled *Race and the Black Male Subculture: The Lives of Toby Waller* (Houston, 2016), political science scholar and author William T. Houston suggests that the life of a contemporary black male living in America can be positioned in parallel to that of the fictional character of Kunta Kinte (referred to here by his slave name Toby Waller) in the aforementioned *Roots* novel. In providing this historical backdrop to the interpretation of the present-day experience of black Americans, Houston indicates that the common denominator is that both share an oppressed cultural identity resulting from ‘structural and cultural forces’ that in the contemporary environment ‘contribute to their being born into a single-parent household with no father, growing up and living in impoverished environments, attending rundown public schools, and exposure to drugs, gangs, and crime at an early age, which harmfully impacts their lives’ (Houston, 2016, p. 5). Whilst a reanimation of the legacy of slavery is performed in making such a comparison, emphasising both the disconnected family histories and subsequent evocation of a sense of hopelessness, it is important to stress that not all African Americans in the United States had ancestors who were slaves. Therefore despite any

limits to a shared sense of cultural memory as suggested by Gilroy, this group of citizens may remain subjugated through the realities of present-day racism and discrimination and the inherent racism in the presumption of all black people having been slaves embedded in the culture and politics which in certain states is not broadly taught. As a result of such social barriers, black populations in America may face a continual uphill struggle to maintain both their cultural identity and social mobility. In psychological studies on multicultural counselling processes for African Americans, Orozco *et al.* (2014) point to ‘enormous within group variability’ resulting from the broad use of the term African American in the US which includes black citizens who may be Spanish-speaking, American Indian, West Indian, and Haitian Americans, as well as recent immigrants from Africa. In addition, there is an increasing range of economic diversity among African Americans and the potential existence of internalised societal messages regarding racial inferiority which may exacerbate downward social mobility, leading to the insistence that ‘the question is not how to treat the Black client, but how to treat this Black client’ (Orozco *et al.*, 2014, p. 133).

In highlighting some of the social factors that impact on the experience of African Americans in the United States, and how they may be linked to the past through cultural memory, diaspora, and/or the legacy of slavery, a complicated network of connections that contribute to the formulation of black identity is further revealed. As the cultural form of music has historically represented a key outlet for the expression of the African-American community, as indicated throughout this chapter, it is now appropriate to discuss what is known as ‘black music’ in the following section.

## **Black Music & Blackness**

In his search for American music, the Czech composer Antonin Dvořák became convinced that the uniqueness of black music lay at the root of the traditions of the country, famously declaring in one 1893 press interview provided to the *New York Herald* that ‘I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called negro melodies’ (Antonin Dvořák, 1893, cited in Miller, 2010, p.

109). Slave songs were heard broadly across the South by the 1830s and 1840s attracting listeners through the appealing characteristics of what was then called ‘slave music’. Visiting Europeans drew attention to both the uniqueness and frequency with which blacks would use song in their daily lives, noting the contrast with white Americans who would predominantly use song when singing hymns. During the antebellum period, a new discourse of folk authenticity emerged in the 1850s and 1860s which emphasised black music as the product of a unique behaviour (for racialisation of music, see pp. 23-27). This is exemplified in the introductory notes to *Slave Songs of the United States* (Allen, Ware & Garrison, 1867) in which reference is made to the ‘barbaric character’ of musical passages, and voices exhibiting ‘a peculiar quality that nothing can imitate’ (Allen, Ware & Garrison, 1867, pp. iv, vi). Such discourse brought widespread public recognition to the recasting of slave music into a new form described as the ‘spiritual’. This reimagining resulted in music characterised with a paradox, in that the unifying message of the spiritual was contradicted by its formal representation as ‘black music’ in being uniquely expressive of the distinction between black and white. Spirituals such as *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* performed by African-American ensembles including the Fisk Jubilee Singers to US and European audiences standardised black cultural expression in the minds of the public.

Swing low, sweet chariot  
Coming for to carry me home  
Swing low, sweet chariot  
Coming for to carry me home

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see?  
Coming for to carry me home  
I saw a band of angels coming after me  
Coming for to carry me home

If you get back to heaven before I do  
Coming for to carry me home

You'll tell all my friends, I'll be coming there too  
Coming for to carry me home

However, as Gilroy (1993) notes, such spiritual groups were also criticised at the time for misrepresenting black music, as African-American folklorists such as Zora Neal Hurston indicated in their disapproval for the 'musicians tricks' incorporated into the Jubilee Singers' performances to the extent that whilst 'the spirituals that have been sung around the world are Negroid to be sure...Negro congregations are highly entertained when they hear their old songs so changed' (Gilroy, 1993, p. 92). In her pursuit to preserve a pure 'Negroness', Hurston also objected to both the commercial recordings of black music that endangered such purity, and racial integration as she feared '...negroness is being rubbed off by close contact with white culture' (Hamilton, 2009, p. 15). This cultural conservatism is reflected in the documented quests of sociologist Howard W. Odum and folklorists such as John Lomax and Dorothy Scarborough and their efforts to collect 'authentic' black folk music which will be addressed later in this chapter.

As interest in African-American music grew in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, stylistic development was encouraged as black music dominated metropolitan entertainment. Conjointly, as both economic circumstances and social relationships between black and white citizens in the US changed, interest in black music was increasingly accompanied by a mystification of 'blackness' that was circulated in the buzz surrounding popular music artefacts at the time. The qualities of blackness that were perceived to reflect a true meaning of such were encapsulated in music in the 'orality, physicality, emotionalism, spirituality, and improvisation as a style of creativity that was derived not from rational calculation but from immediate lived in experience' (Waksman, 2001, p. 177), and so the heightened racialisation of African-American music and the perpetuation of blackness would later both advance black civil rights solidarity and provide African Americans 'a form of cultural ownership whose value linked directly to the collective memory of the music's status as the original possession of US slaves' (Radano, 2012, pp. 311, 315). The intersections of past, present, and future for African Americans are therefore well represented in black music and it is the 'centrality' of this cultural form to

political struggles that musicologist David Brackett (2005) believes ‘undermines the idea that black music can only result from naive beliefs in cultural inferiority and purism’ (Brackett, 2005, p. 87). In her study on the track and accompanying video for *Formation* released in 2016 by Beyoncé, media studies scholar Inna Arzumanova (2016) suggests the pop star aims to position ‘black communities, black activism and black art as enduring weapons against racial violence, reincarnating black pasts to rearticulate and strengthen black futures’ (Arzumanova, 2016, p. 2). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the song and accompanying video have also been noted by Afrofuturist scholar Nettrice Gaskins (2016) to reveal an ‘evolving black vernacular technological creativity’ (see chapter four, p. 156) through processes of reappropriation and reinvention, and that exemplify the notion of ‘blackness as a technology’ (Womack, 2013, p. 27; Steinskog, 2018, p. 37).

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Whilst black identity in the face of institutional oppression are clearly central themes to both the lyrical content and moving images within the video, Arzumanova further suggests the track is ‘closed-source’ in that it is intended to be ‘inaccessible to white audiences who prefer schemes of cultural appropriation as their mode of engagement with racial otherness, loving black culture but not the black people who nurture it’ (Arzumanova, 2016, p. 5). In this respect, it is suggested that *Formation* can be understood as microcosmic to the position of black music in relation to American folk culture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in its refusal

(interpreted in the prominence of ethnocentrism) to be open-source (as an example of global pop music), in a similar sense in which the spirituals were perceived and characterised to be both unifying and 'black'. The main difference in making this comparison, however, is that the positioning of power may be presumed to lie with Beyoncé as the musician, and not the white folklorists, commentators, and slave owners who largely determined how black music was perceived in their work before and after the Civil War.

For a proportion of black Americans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a sense of black identity became diluted as new cultural forms emerged and replaced older ones. Although the narratives of unity and love expressed in styles such as rhythm and blues, soul, and funk were later commercially superseded in popular culture with those largely representative of a criminal lifestyle as in sub-genres of hip-hop such as gangster rap (Krimms, 2007, p. 112), the 'changing same' of black music that poet and music critic Amiri Baraka notably referred to in 1966 (Jones, 2010, p. 205) ensures that despite the perception of hybridised cultural forms of the diaspora, cultural continuity is maintained as new pathways into African-American history, tradition, and ethnic identity are enabled through sound. Therefore, as Gilroy's emblematic model in *The Black Atlantic* makes clear, identities are continually in motion as new routes are created through such creolised, syncretised and hybridised forms (Gilroy, 1993, p. 4). It is this potential of black music as accessible to all in its material and commodified forms that continuously affords the detection of hybridisation through the commonalities and manufactured difference (Haynes, 2013; Miller, 2010) that speaks to both black and white citizens across the world. As Stuart Hall (1996) points out it is within the 'profoundly mythic' arena of popular culture 'where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented, not only to the audiences out there who do not get the message, but to ourselves for the first time' (Hall, 1996, p. 477). So whilst black music is almost perceivably crucial to black identity in its commodified forms, cultural scholars including Gilroy and Hall agree it is not essence-based or in Hall's words 'the truth of our experience' (Hall, 1996, p. 477) but is instead a vehicle for making sense of the world, and similarly to most if not all genres of music may be 'understandable only in relation to other genres at particular moments in time' (Brackett, 2005, p. 80). The

suggestion that an accurate understanding of genre and its connotations including those related to race and gender is synchronic, highlights the continual deferral of the separation point between past and present, in that the construction of a past is achieved through distance in time and so the way in which a musical genre may be characterised and indeed distinguished from others would depend on the distance empirical evidence of that genre is observed, which leads to the next section of this chapter.

In this section, an account of the manner in which ‘blackness’ and ‘black music’ emerged has been discussed, whilst suggesting how such may be exemplified in the popular culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the links between music and a black identity have been highlighted, it would be an appropriate point at which to explore the network that one may assume to connect terms such as blackness with the blues, whilst bearing in mind the time-based distance from which such observations will be made.

## **The Blues**

In providing examples of how African-American experience, diaspora, cultural memory, and identity link to the cultural form of music, it has already been demonstrated how the blues may encapsulate these factors, as expressed in both the lyrical content and within the lived experience of performers whose music may be categorised in the media industry as blues. However, every aspect of blues music from the point the sound was noted to emerge in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, is distinguishable from subsequent forms of black music in the white conceptions of difference inherent in racialised structures and politically charged environments that determined the performance, reproduction, and reception of the cultural form. To explain these distinctions, this section begins with a review of how the blues has been understood and portrayed in the scholarship of cultural studies in relation to the African-American experience.

I cite the beginning of the blues as one beginning of American Negroes....There were no formal stories about the Negro's existence in America passed down in

any pure African tongue. The stories, myths, moral examples, etc., given in African were about Africa (Baraka, 1995, p. xii).

According to Baraka's view, black music became emblematic of black identity through its centralisation in the historical and social experience of displaced Africans to America in which the blues is pinpointed as the origin of the consciousness of African Americans. Additionally, the blues as a musical style is distinct in that it does not represent an essential black cultural identity but is instead grounded in experience that became embedded within the shared memory of African Americans. As noted earlier in the work of Hall (1996) and Gilroy (1993), black music is almost entirely representative of black identity but not necessarily of a lived experience, and in this respect contrasts with how Baraka is understood to have perceived the blues in emphasising the actual lived experience to the point that he more recently reflected that the 'blues could not exist if the African captives had not become American captives' (Baraka, 1995, p. 17).

In his expulsion of Jimi Hendrix and his musical rootedness in the blues from his reconstruction of the black musical idiom, author and cultural critic Nelson George (2003) in effect suggests that the blues lacked a strong black cultural identity, as expressed in the music of an African American that proved to be most popular at the time with white teenagers (George, 2003). Hendrix faced a large amount of criticism in the US and was even publicly scorned as a 'white nigger' by Black Power activists due to his 'shifting relationship to black cultural forms and political movements' (Gilroy, 1993, p. 93). Yet other black music scholars including Samuel Floyd (1996) have embraced Hendrix as a black performer, through identification of the strong links with African-American musical traditions such as the use of call and response and notably so in his most 'gripping performances' such as the *Star-Spangled Banner* at the Woodstock festival in 1969 (Floyd, 1996, p. 202). Further still, Hendrix is now often held up as exemplifying Afrofuturism (for example, see chapter four, p. 170) and has even been described as 'an Afrofuturist Afronaut' (Van Veen, 2016, p. 76). American studies scholar Steve Waksman (2001) has commented that Floyd's analysis of the musical performances of Hendrix enables Floyd to both 'assert the priority of African American

musical influences upon the rock music of the 1960s', and revise 'received notions of black music and black culture in order to admit a greater recognition of the value of cultural exchange' (Waksman, 2001, p. 173). The racial politicisation of blues music and the popular culture pioneers such as Hendrix who reimagined the blues for a new audience persists in parallel to the notion of blues music primarily as an art form. US novelist and literary critic Ralph Ellison (Ellison, Bellow & Callahan, 2003) described the blues in 1964 as 'not primarily concerned with civil rights or obvious political protest' and that as an art form the blues transcend the 'conditions created within the Negro community by the denial of social justice' (Ellison, Bellow & Callahan, 2003, p. 287). However, and as indicated earlier in this chapter, in the pursuit of social justice blues music has at various times been mobilised as a powerful medium with which to address the injustices of the past perceived to be manifest in the social and political practices of the present.

Whilst global all-encompassing themes have been found to characterise blues lyrics (Gussow, 2006; Taft, 2013), British blues historian Paul Oliver (1990) noted in his study of blues music recordings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that such global themes including those concerned with hurt and humiliation and 'expressed in a great many blues about unfaithful partners' clearly parallel 'the black condition in relation to the white community' (Oliver, 1990, p. 93) and it is the involvement of white individuals and groups in the development of blues that will now be addressed.

## **Inventing, Searching and Collecting**

...the only way to define blues with any real precision would be to take the repertoire of every blues performer into account (Palmer, 1982, p. 43).

The extensive efforts made to collect American folk songs from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by figures such as Howard W. Odum and John Lomax are compellingly illustrated in the historian Marybeth Hamilton's *In Search of the Blues* (Hamilton, 2009) and it is this source which provides the foundation for this section.

By the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the blues as a label for a musical form emerged through the medium of sheet music with the publication of W.C. Handy's *The Memphis Blues* in 1912, and as the blues circulated within the black subculture of mainstream America it absorbed aspects of popular music culture of the time, culminating in the first commercial recording *Crazy Blues* sung by Mamie Smith in 1920. In *Long Lost Blues: Popular Blues in America, 1850-1920* musicologist Peter Muir (2010) makes a distinction between popular blues in both vocal and instrumental formats, wherein the first is predominately published for single voice and piano accompaniment, and the second is published for solo piano (Muir, 2010, p. 11). Muir states that a varying mix of folk influences and popular music could be found in both vocal and instrumental formats, and that the folk blues most would later refer to as Delta blues, in this period was largely in an 'undefined state' (Muir, 2010, p. 1). The increasing popularity of what was labelled as the blues is clearly evident in Muir's measure of titular blues publication which includes all sheet music and recorded blues titles. In 1912, only five compositions featured the word blues in the title but in 1920, 147 were copyrighted and/or published from a total of 456 blues publications (Muir, 2010, p. 12). Folk songs recorded in Lafayette County by the white sociologist Howard W. Odum in 1907 were not referred to as blues at the time, and instead, Odum's informants made reference to numerous labels such as 'knife songs', 'coon songs', and 'devil songs'. However, the comparison Odum makes between the song titles and lyrical lines captured in his field recordings and the popular songs of 1925 clearly shows the blues in formation almost twenty years prior (Odum & Johnson, 1926, cited in Hamilton, 2009, p. 44). As Hamilton points out, Odum's quest at the time of his field trip was to 'provide hard and objective proof of black inferiority' and the cylinder recordings Hamilton refers to as the 'Holy Grail: the voice of the blues before record companies got to it, the sound of the music in its natural state' were in fact discarded in the 1920s and never recovered (Hamilton, 2009, pp. 43-45).

The manner in which black music was documented by white folklorists such as Dorothy Scarborough, John Lomax and perhaps to a lesser extent Alan Lomax and Frederic Ramsey was largely shaped by the same attitude towards the people that performed the

music that we would now define as being grounded in racist ideology. As such, nostalgia and imagination also contributed to the construction of African-American folk music, as evidenced in Scarborough's efforts to preserve the older slave songs 'threatened' by mass-market recording which 'have their rough, primitive charm in music and in words' and which 'show us the lighter, happier side of slavery, and re-create for us the rustic merry-making of the slaves on many old plantations of the South' (Scarborough, 1925, cited in Hamilton, 2009, p. 61). Scarborough also used a mechanical aid of reproduction to capture performances and was noted to have been largely influenced by the white mimicry of black music, presuming black slaves to have merely copied the songs and dances of the white slaveholding class rather than having had them passed down from previous generations (Hamilton, 2009, p. 71). Hamilton suggests Scarborough's ironic use of a cylinder recorder enabled her to 'slip into reverie, reliving through her informants' mimicry, the transracial intimacy she felt she had known as a child' (Hamilton, 2009, p. 78). Nostalgia also contributed to the music consumption patterns of white southerners in the 1920s and 1930s who 'were eager to buy music that recalled the past...styles that reached back to the nineteenth century' contrasting with those of black rural southerners who would 'overwhelmingly' favour music which 'suggested a freer, less constricting world than the one they had grown up in' and blues historian Elijah Wald (2010) indicates that music heard in Memphis's Beale Street, Harlem, and Chicago are idyllic examples (Wald, 2010, p. 96).

In the 1920s white interest in the blues also resulted from its popularity in America's mainstream spurring white composers and musicians to contribute to the genre as a whole for commercial gain. Interest may have also been fuelled by the positioning of a blues style in an 'out-of-reach' racialised context in which the emerging 'low-down blues' that was characterised in a 1923 trade journal *Sheet Music News* as 'the typical numbers of the Southern colored folks', in contrast to 'white blues' that featured faster tempos in a ballad form, became an increasingly desirable commodity as the article made clear that 'no white man can write low down blues' (Muir, 2010, p. 19). Although Muir points out the oversimplification in this taxonomy, as black and white composers engaged with both styles, the positioning of 'low down blues' as something representing difference and an

otherness ties in with the racialised ideology of the time influencing the pursuits made by folklorists and record companies executives whilst also contributing to rhetorical developments in the notions of authenticity. In pursuit of an otherness, folk song collectors such as John Lomax looked to exert their power in the portrayal of a black music form that proved immensely popular (for discussion of the racialisation of music and music othering, see pp. 23-27, 42-44).

In *American Ballads and Folksongs* first published in 1934 John Lomax quotes music critic Henry Krehbiel in declaring that ‘the truest, the most intimate folk music is that produced by suffering’ whilst attesting to the conformity of black inmate singing in convict camps to this statement (Lomax & Lomax, 1994, p. xxxii). The expression of emotion Lomax sought on field recording trips can be seen to demonstrate both his persistence in capturing that emotion and the abuse of power to the detriment of the performer. This is exemplified in the case of a convict named Black Samson who was essentially forced by a prison warden at the request of Lomax at Nashville State Penitentiary to commit a sin in singing a song for a recording that placed him ‘in danger of hell-fire’ as a conservative Baptist who since joining the church ‘no longer dared sing it’ (Lomax & Lomax, 1994, p. 49). The convict asked God for forgiveness prior to singing and Lomax later reminisced in a letter that ‘meanwhile our machine had recorded both the prayer and the songs. I call this my prize record’ (Hamilton, 2009, p. 138). These efforts partly suggest why Popular Front folklorists and Hungarian-born music collector Lawrence Gellert contended that the recordings made by Lomax could never represent a true and unmediated authentic black voice. Although Lomax could not understand the criticism he received, the documentation of both the field trips and the associated recordings caught the imagination of others interested in celebrating ‘those voices of resistance and struggle that the powerful would prefer to drown out’ in ‘commitment to a broadly inclusive American culture’ (Hamilton, 2009, pp. 136, 143).

Although Alan Lomax followed in his father’s footsteps in becoming a folklorist, the narrative that accompanied his endeavours in the field from the late 1930s centred on the social dynamics of the music that could be found in a recorded material form or otherwise

and not confined to prisons or isolated rural locations but within urban environments. A new politicised vision of folklore that swept through the radical left, which conceptualised folklore as perpetually evolving in the daily lives of individuals in modern life, underpinned the efforts of Lomax and other folklorists including Benjamin A. Botkin. American author and journalist Francis Davis (2005) suggests the first blues revival took place in this period as 'blues records distributed almost exclusively to Southern blacks a decade earlier wound up in the hands of white leftist intellectuals who tended to view blues performers as representatives of a rural underclass further disadvantaged by race' (Davis, 2005, p. 13). These intellectuals included Frederic Ramsey, Charles Edward Smith, and William Russell who sought authentic black music in urban red-light districts such as Storyville, New Orleans. The collective efforts resulted in the publication of *Jazzmen* (Russell *et al.*, 1939), one of the first researched books on the history of jazz.

The work of the 'jazzmen' was also spurred by the commercial recordings of the 1920s and 1930s which included those by the likes of Joseph 'King' Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton. Blues music that was revered by white folklorists and collectors, including the recordings made by Charley Patton, only sold moderately at the time they were originally released whilst those of Son House, Skip James, and Robert Johnson barely sold at all. Jukeboxes in bars of black neighbourhoods in the South, as elsewhere in America, instead contained the urban jazz-inflected sounds of Louis Jordan, Count Basie, and Fats Waller (Hamilton, 2009, p. 11). As the jazzmen realised that white imitators benefitted often to the detriment of black originators such as Morton who were either ignored or unceremoniously discarded by racist record company executives, the blues was reimagined in the mind of individuals such as Ramsey who sought to disentangle the blues from jazz in pursuit of a new origins narrative. Through numerous field trips into the South from 1951, which included photographing the countryside and recording performances by musicians who had never been recorded before, Hamilton suggests Ramsey's archetypal bluesman 'could have stepped out of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century' (Hamilton, 2009, p. 200). It is this characterisation of both blues music and the practitioners of such within the period between the 1950s and 1960s that proved influential to the definitions of blues and how it would come to be understood as a genre

including those aspects relating to gender, geographical location, memory, race, and technology (see p. 16).

The interest of influential record collectors such as James McKune and his collecting circle dubbed the 'Blues Mafia', and historical authors including Samuel Charters propelled blues revivalism through their publications in magazines, journal articles, and books to the point that they collectively 'invented' the blues. As the widely held view was that the Delta was the home of such a 'pure' musical form of black culture, the music previously referred to as country blues was relabelled as the Delta blues in the 1960s. Ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon (1993) has previously reflected on this point of culmination in suggesting that 'our discoveries like those of the European explorers, were mixtures of invention and interpretation, and in a way, instead of finding our object, blues, we constituted it' (Titon, 1993, p. 222). Disagreements between folklorists and record collectors on the basis with which to place importance on for example, the performer or the recorded artefact and/or the obscurity or historical black popularity of such, only strengthened the re-emerging rhetoric of blues authenticity and so the identity of the genre as a form of popular music in the commercial marketplace was defined by its oppositional positioning to the same market (for key debates in the 1950s to 1960s, see pp. 11-13, 16-19, 21-23, 37-28).

The representation of black authenticity in the form of blues music stemming from Odum's field trip in 1907 to the work of blues scholars in the 1960s such as Jeff Todd Titon, David Evans, and Paul Oliver has been widely influential in cementing how blues music is presented and how it should be heard. In its recorded form however, and as an example of culture reflecting the lived experience of African Americans, the manner in which the searching, collecting, and documentation of such music took place, as evidenced in this section, strongly suggests it is as much a reflection of those white enthusiasts who were drawn to such music as it is of the musicians who performed in the associated recordings. The actions of the likes of John and Alan Lomax, and the Blues Mafia resulted in a narrow misrepresentation of an African-American tradition that evolved outside of the confines of the restrictive criteria upon which they based their quests in search for 'realness'. As a result, such actions kept 'authentic blackness' in its

anthropological form of the bluesman in a subjugated position and it is upon such narrow misrepresentations, that white interest and engagement in what had been defined as the Delta blues, increased.

## **White Blues?**

The mass of both written and audio material concerning the blues is perhaps a testimony to the fact white listeners enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, listening to the music. Whilst both much has been said in discourse surrounding the blues since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and white Europeans are noted to have been continually drawn to primitivism and a perceived freedom of otherness for centuries before then, it is the reception of music as an auditory experience that initially compelled white interest in the blues. Wald (2004) suggests that in contrast to the original black blues audience who ‘looked to singers to tell truthful, day-to-day stories’ the white audience in the post-war era were predominantly drawn to the music for ‘emotional release, for a raw, direct passion that it found lacking in white styles’ (Wald, 2004, pp. 256-257). In contrast to the folk revivalists conception of Delta blues, white teenage audiences in the UK sensed that blues music addressed shared experience and fell in-line with their new circumstances after years of light entertainment that failed to appeal. Of course, a parallel can be drawn here with the crossover appeal of hip-hop to white audiences a few decades later (see pp. 19-20, 51).

In 1961 blues collector McKune explained that ‘after you’ve listened to the real Negro blues for a long time, you know at once that the protest of the blues is...[in the] accompanying piano or guitar’ (Hamilton, 2009, p. 230). Whilst McKune is de-politicising the blues, in referring to the subtleties of the instrumentation rather than focus on the occasionally overt nature of the lyrical content, instrumental blues songs have been recorded and published since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and therefore, it is entirely feasible that listeners could be initially and primarily drawn to characteristics of the musical elements that comprised the blues without necessarily listening to and/or fully comprehending the sometimes indecipherable lyrics.

Contemporary scholarship on the blues and black music may be viewed as an extension of the exchanges between the folklorists and record collectors of the 1950s and 1960s (for example in the ‘de-contextualisation’ of black music, see pp. 50-51), and discourse concerned with the value of blues music leads almost inadvertently to the definition of music styles and practitioners emblematic of such to be classified as authentic or inauthentic. Furthermore, and as Buddy Guy reflected on his time recording with Chess Records in the 1950s, sociocultural factors may impede on the aesthetics of a recording:

In person I’ve always been Buddy Guy; in the studio I never has [*sic*] been Buddy Guy....They’d always tell me to turn that amplifier down, don’t play that, that’s noise. And I’d say man this is my blood, this is me (Guy cited in Waksman, 2001, p. 139).

The misrepresentation of the ‘real’ Buddy Guy on record, without the amplifier feedback and distortion which was then banned in the studio, exemplifies a lack of freedom blues performers would experience in expressing themselves fully. It is only when African-American performers such as Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone gained control of the studio environment that the situation could be inverted (for further discussion of cultural identity, technology, the blues and Afrofuturism, see chapter four, pp. 170-172).

Despite such barriers, there remains value in blues recordings not only as cultural artefacts that allow us to listen to musicians of the past but in the connections of black traditions such as improvisation that are exemplified in such that reflect lived experience. However, what must be considered when making value judgments of such artefacts are the circumstances surrounding the production of recordings akin to Brackett’s (2005) suggestion that in discussion of black popular music genres and mass-market labels, greater precision may be achieved by observing the uses of such labels in one particular moment of time (Brackett, 2005, p. 80). What ethnomusicologists and musicologists such as Maultsby (2017), Radano (2013), Miller (2010), and Wald (2010) agree on is the cultural exchange that has taken place between black and white individuals and communities since the 19<sup>th</sup> century that has contributed to what has been labelled as blues music. The widespread agreement and acknowledgement of this fact has and continues

to almost inevitably lead to questions of ownership related to race, such as those addressed in this chapter concerned with the extent of the links between notions of blackness and the blues. Such questions arise when power is contested or appears to be the subject of a question, and the frequency of such is based on the sociological context of a particular time period. More specifically, the lived experience and cultural expression of black American performers such as Beyoncé can give rise to and perpetuate questions of power and ownership, that as musicologist Philip Tagg (1989) notably argued can not be resolved for ‘as long as no-one really knows what musics Africans actually brought with them to the USA, a very important research priority, it is impossible to say what is specifically ‘Afro’ in ‘Afro-American’ music’ (Tagg, 1989, p. 12). Tagg’s advocacy for an end to the use of the terms ‘black music’ and ‘white music’ 28 years ago is still noted to be held as a principle publication with respect to the dissolution of the ownership argument (Beard & Gloag 2016, p. 214; Maultsby & Burnim, 2017, p. 52). Yet blues-marketed music is continuously drawn upon as a vehicle for social commentary as its use in contemporary popular music forms brings with it powerful racialised connotations and immediate cultural memories of the past that exemplify the subjugation of the African-American population specifically in the period between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cultural identity becomes central to discourse when it experiences difficulty or danger and through the increasing availability of both a range of sources and technological resources that may give rise to identity construction, globalisation affords the environment in which such danger may be experienced.

This chapter has explored the intersection of popular music, the blues, society, and politics whilst highlighting some of the themes that constitute blues historiography and in so doing illustrates how the engagement of black and white audiences with the blues was not necessarily the result of the same perceived qualities interpreted to exist within the cultural form. The sound of the blues in recorded form, upon which these interpretations and value judgements are based, may not always truly represent a musician’s creative vision. Therefore, a ‘true’ identity, whilst contested in discourse of cultural ownership that itself is further complicated by centuries of cultural exchange, is subsequently

diminished or augmented and dependent on the chronological distance from which such an identity is perceived. However, recorded blues music as an expression of a lived experience of African Americans remains a powerful tool for contemporary musicians to make political statements in their own artistic practices. Although conceptions of blackness are founded on white myths it remains important in the creation of identity and in developing an understanding of such in relation to a broad societal context, particularly as it came to be embraced by black Americans and in spite of its racialised origin. Additionally, the embedding of key musical characteristics deemed to be emblematic of black music such as the use of improvisation may be perceived to add further 'weight' to the cultural value of such objects.



## Chapter 3: Blues Music and a Sense of Place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### **Introduction**

This sociomusicological study aims to highlight questions central to how blues music is interpreted and experienced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is achieved firstly through the provision of a succinct account of the debates and findings concerned with the musical traditions that may have given rise to the blues. In doing so, Anglo-American traditions are cross-referenced with the features and characteristics of African music in the context of blues music historiography. Secondly, the role of place in the categorisation of blues-marketed artefacts and a sense of place as it relates to origin, displacement, and perceptions of authenticity is explored in addition to connections between geographical locations and social movements. In exploring these areas, it is argued that current conceptions of blues-marketed music are narrowly demarcated in reflecting the ideologies of the past concerned with an aura of authenticity, and that a more fluid definition is required in order to express the cultural diversity of participants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the contribution a sense of place makes to blues music is surveyed.

As a review of the contextual literature has illustrated (pp. 32-35), both a sense of place and a cultural identity may be powerfully generated by music. Martin Stokes (1997) has argued that ‘music is socially meaningful not entirely, but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places and the boundaries which separate them’ (Stokes, 1997, p. 5). Recent studies in ethnomusicology (Butterworth, 2017; Quintero, 2018) have continued to highlight this argument by showing the complexity of defining genre and stylistic boundaries in discourses of world music: in his exploration of the traditional regional Andean genre *santiago* in Huancayo, Peru, and its distinction from the broader *huayno*, noted to be less geographically specific as a national Andean genre, James Butterworth (2017) illustrates how rural and urban imagery may be

produced through music and further emphasised in accompanying music videos, whilst Michael Birenbaum Quintero's (2018) fieldwork on the economic and cultural system *champeta* in the cities of Colombia's Caribbean coast reveals a geographic diversity that includes a repertoire consisting of Jamaican reggae, Brazilian samba, and folkloric Puerto Rican acoustic string music.

A degree of music's social meaningfulness may also be witnessed in its power to not only provide a sense of place but to largely define specific locations and sustain ethnic associations as Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2012) demonstrates in her study on the Ethiopian diaspora community in the urban areas of Ethiopia. As I have already illustrated in chapter two (pp. 102-104) diasporic cultural forms including music enable home spaces to be created through the production of cultural heritage experiences. Stokes (1997) suggests that such 'relocation' through the consumption of musical performances 'evokes and organizes collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity' (Stokes, 1997, p. 3). This power may be evidenced not only in the social activities of members of diasporic communities but can also be witnessed in the efforts of folklorists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aided by the mechanical reproduction of sound, who sought to preserve forms of music strongly associated with specific locations from a particular time (see chapter two, pp. 117-121). As Andrew James Green (2016) points out in his exploration of the music-making processes in the public spaces of Mexico City, the power of music may also be exploited and politicised, fulfilling strategic roles either as a medium for the dissemination of a political message or as an attractive force to draw the public into particular spaces that are filled with other forms of media such as leaflets and posters. In these ways, the association between a particular locale and music may be strengthened through one's experience not only of the space(s) but of the people encountered in such.

As discussed in the conceptual framework (pp. 55-56) the instability of cultural identity and genre over an indeterminate amount of time should, in theory, lead to the continuous recategorisation of musical recordings. However, the demarcation of the boundaries of blues music and the reclassification of texts belonging to the blues genre remains a

contentious issue almost 100 years after the first blues-marketed recording was released, and a broad range of factors underpin a resistance to change. The following extract taken from the introduction of *The Penguin Guide to Blues Recordings* (Russell *et al.*, 2006) illustrates some of these factors:

...we have been selective in our coverage of blues-rock, especially when it seems more closely connected to rock than to blues. The artists in that genre whom we have included are predominantly those who record for blues labels. We have also been cautious about artists lately hailed in some quarters as purveyors of ‘21st-century blues’, ‘punk blues’, or ‘nu blues’. Some of them are making interesting music that’s undoubtedly influenced by the blues, but there are hundreds of artists you can say that about...if we had added them all to our list this book would never have been finished (Russell *et al.*, 2006, p. vii).

Undoubtedly, the depth and breadth of blues ‘influenced’ music will remain challenging to anyone who wishes to produce a compendium of information concerned with blues recordings, but such a defence raises a number of issues related to the classification of music. In this instance, a handful of contributors are responsible for entries relating to over a thousand blues artists and this small group of individuals ultimately decide what is deemed blues music and what is not. Such collections then always reflect the ideologies of those who are empowered to contribute, and the inclusion and exclusion of particular artists and recordings does not and can not reflect the aesthetic tastes of all popular music consumers. The basis on which blues is demarcated from rock in the above example only raises further questions, such as those concerned with how to define a blues record label for instance. One might also imagine that a book published in the 21<sup>st</sup> century might even prioritise works categorised as ‘21<sup>st</sup> century’ but this is not the case. How to define blues music then becomes a key component of the process and is as mentioned, a reflection of the aesthetic values and sociocultural positioning of the authors. In this case, Russell and Smith argue that the ‘core audiences’ for these excluded musical acts are different from the ‘mainstream blues audience’ and that not many ‘are discussed in blues magazines or appear at blues festivals’ (Russell *et al.*, 2006, p. vii). Again, how to define a

‘mainstream blues audience’ or even a blues magazine becomes central to the process of categorisation and such issues deeply characterise the discourses surrounding blues music historiography.

The results of a comparative study performed by Deborah E. Kulczak and Lora L. Jetton (2011) on genre heading application on AllMusic.com (AllMusic, 2018a), Wikipedia (Wikipedia, 2018), and a digitised copy of the fourth edition of *The Encyclopedia of Popular Music* (Oxford Reference, 2018) showed that in a sample of 338 popular music groups, AllMusic.com featured both a higher number of artist entries (332) and assigned the highest average number of stylistic tags (3.07) per entry (Kulczak & Jetton, 2011, p. 229). In focusing on the role of place in blues music classification, the depth and breadth of music labelling on AllMusic.com makes it a useful source for illustrating the consistency of such process. Founded in the early 1990s by Michael Erlewine with the aim of including every known existing musical recording, what became known as AllMusic.com is also one of the longest running open access databases of its kind. The database relies on artist submissions and amendments through the data provider TiVo which utilises a knowledge graph engine to produce an ever-increasing number of constellations concerned with cultural artefacts and the popularity of such with consumers. Artist submissions and music content is managed by a group of editors who add and amend stylistic labels where it is deemed appropriate and as will be shown, the database is useful for highlighting many of the issues concerning categorisation processes and blues music both as conceptualised in the past and how cultural artefacts are considered in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Additionally, the work utilises outcomes of world music studies in ethnomusicology, literature on hip-hop and Afrofuturism, and sociological studies concerned with the African-American experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as aspects of social media that provide the basis for an exploration of a sense of place as it relates to social movements.

## Anglo-American Tradition

By the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, British Europeans had established a significant colonial presence in America. Initial immigrants from Britain sought to increase their wealth through land ownership, but as time passed individuals moved to escape religious or political persecution at home. The Atlantic slave trade was also well established by this time, with British colonies encompassing an ever-increasing number of slaves from Africa (Taylor, 2011, pp. 7-8). The music that European settlers, including those from Britain, brought with them to America can be organised into three categories: popular music, 'art' music (commonly referred to as 'classical' music) and religious music. Religious music from Britain was rooted in the relatively recent developments of the baroque period that included homophonic textures built upon tonal structures composed of an organised arrangement of pitches in major or minor keys (Sadie & Tyrrell, 2002a, pp. 475-476). This can be contrasted to some extent with immigrants from predominantly Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy, and France where religious music remained steeped in the tradition of the Renaissance period, and which was based on modal harmony (Sadie & Tyrrell, 2002b, p. 815). Classical music of the time was popular with the middle and upper classes, and early forms included the madrigal, an unaccompanied vocal composition consisting of three-to-six part polyphony, wherein performers would express the meaning in the words of a sophisticated poem through music (Sadie & Tyrrell, 2002c, pp. 545, 547). Immigrants initially brought portable instruments such as recorders and members of the violin or viol family but would later bring larger key-based instruments such as the clavichord and harpsichord across the Atlantic. Popular music included the folk songs of Britain that consisted of lyric songs, work songs, children's songs, and broadside ballads. The latter became popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and numerous American folk songs may be traced back to these ballads. Lyric songs conveyed a particular feeling or mood and tended to be more private and introspective in nature than the more dramatic ballads. Work songs originated as songs to work by and included railroad and lumber songs sung to the rhythm of the striking of a hammer or the movement of an oar. Children songs included lullabies and music to accompany games (Cohen, 2006, pp. 9, 40; Sadie & Tyrrell, 2002a, p. 471).

The systematic collection of rural songs, tunes, and dances began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century around the same time the terms folk song and folk music were coined by collectors, and by the end of this period, the terms were widely used across Europe. In the introduction to *A History of European Folk Music*, Jan Ling (1997) suggests that folk music provided a ‘counterbalance to the highly specialized functions and aesthetic regulations of art music’ during this time as ‘many people regarded folk music as an antidote to the “artificialization” of music, that could be used to build bridges, closing the gap between highly disparate musical environments’ (Ling, 1997, p. 3).

Popular music of the time in the period from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century typically featured a number of characteristics including a tendency towards Dorian and Mixolydian modes, free rhythms derived from text, monophony, homophony through vocal harmonies, guitar or banjo accompaniments, strophic form, and I, IV, V harmony in folk ballads such as *Barbara Allen* (Cohen, 2006, p. 11; Van der Merwe, 1992, p. 171). The 18<sup>th</sup> century also brought about the equal temperament tuning system that permitted modulation between all major and minor keys primarily for keyboard-based instruments. The equal spacing of intervals adopted to achieve this aim involved a compromise that meant some intervals were nudged away from the natural pitch resonances, and as a result, the third, sixth, and seventh intervals are all measured to be slightly sharp of the natural pitches. As such, an untrained human voice is noted to sing these intervals flat in relation to the tempered scale. This natural tendency survived in British folk music, which did not rely on keyboard instruments, and was carried by settlers to America. From this, it can be seen how folk music performance blurred major and minor intervals in relation to the tempered scale in Western music.

## **The Conflation of Anglo-American and African Traditions**

In his work on blues music history and tradition, British ethnomusicologist Paul Oliver has described the origins of the blues as ‘admittedly obscure’ (Oliver, 1990, p. 4), whilst historian Marybeth Hamilton more directly suggests that ‘no one knows who sang the

first blues, or where they sang it, or when' (Hamilton, 2009, p. 27). A lack of documentation from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century has led to a reliance on stories concerned with first encounters with the blues such as W.C. Handy's retrospective account detailing an informal performance at a Tutwiler train station in 1903 (Palmer, 1982, p. 45; Russell, 1997, p. 19). Whilst musicologist Peter Van der Merwe (1992) acknowledges the challenge such a barrier poses, he has suggested that a refocusing of scholarly enquiry and activity may enable blues historians to trace the links within the blues canon more clearly:

The ancestors of the blues are as diverse as its progeny. Concentration on the blues of oppression has obscured its link with other styles. Its genealogy includes clear connections with both British and African folk music, as well as the jigs, dance songs, minstrel tunes, and even parlour music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The processes by which these very different traditions have combined into a single style are among the most fascinating in musical history (Van der Merwe, 1992, p. 117).

In contrast to scholarship produced by Tony Russell (1997) and Robert Palmer (1982) who in their respective works both largely ignore the possibility of European influences in the roots of the tradition, Van der Merwe devotes almost as much attention to British influences in the origins of the blues as he does to those from Africa (Van der Merwe, 1992, pp. 171-183). More recent scholars of the blues such as Elijah Wald (2010) have also noted the potential influence of the European folk tradition on musicians in the South and the musical influence of the UK through religious songs sung in church (Wald, 2010, pp. 12, 15). Austrian ethnologist Gerhard Kubik (1999) has similarly acknowledged Euro-American influences in the cultural interactions of the socio-economic climate in the southern states of America, that are perceived to have informed the development of the blues in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Kubik, 1999, p. 4).

The confluence of both what became an Anglo-American tradition with the African-American tradition associated with blues music included the formation of, or at the very

least created the foundation for, what are collectively referred to as blue notes but a definition of such has been subject to much discussion (see pp. 36-39).

In rather the same way as the richness of Renaissance harmony was eventually whittled down to little more than the three primary triads, that of African modality was reduced to the powerful simplicity of the blues mode. One can only guess what forces lay behind this tendency; but it seems reasonable to suppose that one of them was the catalytic influence of British folk styles. (Van der Merwe, 1992, p. 145)

Whilst a tendency to flatten the third and seventh notes in British folk music may have accounted for the blue note characteristics that largely define the style, it is possible that both the American folk song tradition and African tradition shared this commonality prior to the African diaspora of the slave trade period. In *Africa and the Blues*, Gerhard Kubik (1999) suggests the equiheptatonic and sometimes equidecatonic scales, based on seven and ten notes and noted to exist in the music of West African regions, were largely erased as West Africans encountered Western factory-produced instruments, with the exception of the blue notes (Kubik, 1999, pp. 119-120), and Robert Palmer (1982) noted the utilisation of falling pitches in the performances of the Akan people of Ghana to resemble heightened emotion, a feature that would typify blues music performances (Palmer, 1982, p. 34). Both black and white musicians would freely borrow from one another in 19<sup>th</sup> century America performing pentatonic tunes such as *Pretty Polly* and *Barbara Allen*. Plantation house musicians learned European classical music to improve their standing in the stratified environment of the South (Palmer, 1982, p. 40), and white plantation owners would recruit African-Americans musicians to perform, effectively patronising the blues (Kubik, 1999, p. 202). White musicians would also imitate and misrepresent the characteristics of black slaves and their music through the infamous minstrelsy tradition (see chapter two, p. 90). The level of cultural interaction between black and white southerners in America during this period has perhaps obscured the precise origin of blue notes for good and this point is summarised by Philip Tagg (1989) who suggested ‘if groups of people with white skin in the USA have been singing

between the cracks on the piano, even only over the last hundred years - a conservative estimation, it is illogical to conclude that “blue notes” are exclusively “black”/ “Afro” or exclusively “white”/ “Euro” (Tagg, 1989, p. 7).

The implicit meaning suggested in the aforementioned pitch alterations during performances by African and African-American singers is not limited to any individual musical trait, but can be applied to other areas such as in the utilisation of harmony and instrumentation. Kubik points to the ‘cognitive hinge’ of such characteristics and those who adopt them in suggesting that ‘for the foreign observer the instrument (guitar) and the chords (I-IV-V) are recognizably “Western”, but for the native performer both may have totally different connotations and meanings’ (Kubik, 1999, p. 200). One example Kubik (2005) provides is the emphasis on the functioning dominant chord in Western music that is frequently absent in rural blues music styles within which greater importance is placed on the subdominant chord (Kubik, 2005, p. 207). Despite such observations, the practices of Western music tradition have long been maintained as the origin of blues harmony by musicologists such as Marshall Stearns who interprets blues harmony as clearly derived from European music (Stearns, 1957, p. 104) and Walter Everett who also perceives structural diatonic harmony as the basis for minor pentatonic melodies in blues music (Everett, 2004, p. 16).

In addition to both the mechanics and style of delivery ethnomusicologists Mellonee Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (2014) identify sound quality, as being a significant component of African-American music and suggest that ‘encounters between Europeans and Africans during the period of the Atlantic slave trade reveal that musicians of African descent often produced musical timbres similar to those common in performances of African music that were, thus, unfamiliar to their Western captors’ (Burnim & Maultsby, 2014, p. 9). The heterogeneous sound quality that both captivated and puzzled Europeans was also eventually embraced by white southern Americans as later developments in instrumentation such as the banjo, derived from the Wolof *halam* and rooted in the Senegambia Confederation, became cornerstones of American folk music, as white performers imitated the playing technique and performance style of black slaves (Palmer,

1982, pp. 30-32). The combination of instruments such as the banjo, guitar, jug, harmonica, and kazoo found in jug bands also provided contrasting timbres that were initially uncommon in traditional Western ensembles and which textures ‘conform to an African aesthetic ideal’ (Burnim & Maulsby, 2014, p. 8). Sound modification techniques were also common in early rural blues music as instrumentalists, particularly guitarists, imitated the human voice using materials such as glass, copper, or brass to create *glissando* effects that mimicked melismatic vocal approaches abound with slurs, turns, and *grupetto*.

Although not exclusive to blues music, the use of call and response became an integral component of blues music as a West African tradition that took on great significance through the adaption of the form in group labour on plantations and subsequent work on railways and in lumber gangs. Subsequently, call and response became a staple of blues performances that featured instruments such as the guitar and/or harmonica providing a stable foundation for improvisation through repetition. The use of repetition also emphasises and subsequently enables the structural norms to be more easily perceived affording greater subtlety than in a formally more complex setting. The twelve-bar form and its accompanying three-line stanza or tercet often associated with blues music, provides such a simple structural framework for improvised exchanges. The origins of the twelve-bar form have also been disputed, Van der Merwe (1992) suggests it played no part in the early development of blues music and that the ‘three-part form’ (4+4+4) originated in Britain (Van der Merwe, 1992, pp. 129-130), and Wald (2010) indicates it may have been predated by a more simple eight-bar form with only two lyrical lines (Wald, 2010, pp. 4-5). However, Kubik (1999) points to the ‘trouble’ white musicians had adjusting, causing them to reinterpret the form back to Western models as ‘a compelling indication of the 12-bar blues form’s non-European background’ (Kubik, 1999, p. 202). In a survey of the genre at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century musicologist Peter C. Muir (2010) notes that slightly less than half of the popular blues songs from the 1910s featured the twelve-bar form, distinguishing it from Tin Pan Alley material which very rarely uses such structure (Muir, 2010, p. 67). There appears to be no new definitive evidence that sheds light on the precise origins of the form and whilst becoming a key characteristic of what was understood as blues, it is logical that it was predated by even

more simple structures and that despite the popularity of the form at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are a large number of blues songs that utilise eight and sixteen-bar variants and therefore blues should not be defined by the twelve-bar framework alone.

In a comparative study of African and African-American music, Ghanaian ethnomusicologist J.H. Kwabena Nketia highlights polyrhythmic organisation as one of the 'residual strains' that permits an African sound quality in performance (Nketia cited in Burnim & Maultsby, 2014, p. 7). Van der Merwe suggests that with the exception of New Orleans, African percussion ensembles quickly died out in America, and that the origins of American rhythm do not lie in 'the big drum ensembles of southern Ghana' but in the 'West African antecedents' of instruments that 'survived' such as the banjo, string bass, panpipes, and musical bow (Van der Merwe, 1992, p. 162). As African drums and communal music-making were largely banned on American soil, the complexity of African rhythm was shaded with more simplistic rhythmic trends. Kubik notes the absence of complex Guinea-Coast-style polyrhythmic organisation from the blues tradition (Kubik, 1999, p. 64) with such being relatively emblematic of rhythmic practices located in West Africa as a whole and also not dissimilar to those rhythmic styles located further east and further south (Van der Merwe, 1992, p. 156). However, the 'residual strains' Nketia refers to can perhaps be pinpointed and differentiated from European musical influences in the formation of the blues.

The 12/8 time signature, broadly recognised as the characteristic meter of blues music, has been attributed to African origins, as it shapes the metrical background of much of the musical rhythms heard in that part of the world. Whilst the use of the meter also has a long history in European folk and classical music traditions, the lack of emphasis on accentual stress and duration in the African music approach, that instead derives meter from the grouping of beat divisions as 'there is no conception of placing longer notes on strong beats or shorter notes on weak beats' contrasts with that of the Western approach, which in part suggests the blues beat did not derive from European metrical schemes (Burns, 2010, pp. 2-3). Van der Merwe highlights two common African and African-

American rhythmic patterns, reproduced here in figure 2, that illustrate the grouping of beats in the ‘African equivalent’ of simple and compound time:



Figure 2: Common African rhythmic patterns

The first pattern divides the beats of a measure in 8/8 into pulses of 3+5 and the second pattern, derived from a swung rhythm, groups the beats into pulses of 5+7 (with a convenient ratio of 5: 4: 3) (Van der Merwe, 1992, pp. 158-159). In addition to the use of eight and twelve-pulse patterns and the irregular grouping of beats within such, Van der Merwe also suggests that the hemiola and more generally the ‘two against three’ grouping is ‘of almost proverbial importance in African music’ and that infant Africans ‘are trained to hear the six-pulse unit as interchangeably 3+3 and 2+2+2, beginning with the lullabies they hear from their mothers’ (Van der Merwe, 1992, p. 158). This feature is evident in blues music where the distinction between simple and compound time is blurred as duplets and triplets are freely interspersed between successive parts of the vocal and/or between the vocal and accompaniment (Titon, 1994, p. 147).

In their study on John Lee Hooker’s rhythmic practice, musicology scholars Fernando Benadon and Ted Gioia (2009) found that Hooker’s conversion of what is inherently a triplet figure into a duplet isoriff takes on greater significance as it lies at the heart of the metrical shift in popular music that began in the 1950s from the triplet or shuffle feel implied by 12/8 time to ‘straight’ eighth notes (8/8), and also noted the greater use of duple figures at higher tempos (Benadon & Gioia, 2009, p. 23). Van der Merwe (1992) calls the blurring of the distinction between simple and compound time ‘a special American development ...whereby the same dance tune may be performed to a lilting 12/8 when “allegretto” and a straight 4/4 when “presto”’ (Van der Merwe, 1992, p. 162). Certainly, the 12/8 time signature is closely associated with blues music and any use of a shuffle rhythm connotes the blues and African-American practice. Despite this, and perhaps because of the blurred distinction between simple and compound time signatures

in any given performance, the blues is commonly noted to be isometric with a 4/4 time signature, although there are exceptions to both of these characteristics.

When cross-referencing Anglo-American and African traditions in the context of blues music, the elements discussed may help us to distinguish between the folk traditions that seemingly culminated to form the blues, as the use of chords I, IV, and V, strophic form, guitar-based accompaniments, 'loose' approaches to the use of rhythm, and the context of work songs, ballads and lyric songs can all be found in both Anglo-American folk music and early African-American blues music. Despite these similarities, the oral tradition of folk music passed from generation to the next, has resulted in music that is continuously modified, analogically akin to a game of Chinese whispers. The British songs that were taken to America during the colonisation period, were gradually adapted to suit the singers who would 'localise' the songs to enhance the relevancy of the lyrics often removing irrelevant words such as 'lord' and 'lady' and referring to local geographical locations instead of European places. Improvised lines were also common with musicians often mixing lyrics from other singers based in the region with improvised sentences (Wald, 2010, pp. 114-115). Whilst the British folk music traditions thrived during the colonisation period, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such traditions survived only in remote rural communities such as the Appalachian Mountains, leading to formal efforts to preserve Anglo-American folk song in scholarship at this time.

## **Place in Categorisation and Stylistic Labelling**

Whilst genre labelling often makes it easier for listeners to locate and make sense of emerging artists and their music, this form of classification is often found to be inconsistent across music outlets in both lexical terms and the depth and structure of the label hierarchies as even the most widely used tags such as rock and pop have contrasting definitions. Genre labelling may also incorporate geographical information, for example, a search for the term 'World Music' on Amazon.co.uk will reveal labels such as 'Africa', 'Australia and New Zealand', and 'Pacific Islands' and although this may provide a

consumer with the quickest route to the music they are seeking, classification based on location may not always be useful as there may be, even if occasionally, stylistic similarities across multiple countries and continents.

In the third edition of the *All Music Guide to The Blues* (Bogdanov, Woodstra & Erlewine, 2003) there is identification of 47 styles within the blues genre, 22 of such labels make reference explicitly to place such as ‘Texas Blues’, ‘East-Coast Blues’, and ‘New Orleans Blues’, and three provide a sense of place as in ‘Urban Blues’, ‘Country Blues’, and ‘Swamp Blues’. A search on AllMusic.com reveals 59 styles of blues music including ‘Regional Blues’ and ‘Juke Joint Blues’ (AllMusic.com, 2016). The addition of the regional blues tag is particularly interesting as it can be found under the heading ‘Early Acoustic Blues’ and has been applied to acts such as Charley Patton, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Eric Clapton, Led Zeppelin, and Stevie Ray Vaughan, but has not been applied to contemporary blues-based acts such as Keb’ Mo’, The White Stripes, The Black Keys, and Seasick Steve. However, Jimbo Mathus who ‘carries the torch for Southern music traditions’ and is described as being active from the 1990s to 2010s, does feature the tag on the artist profile page (Phares, 2017). The Louisiana-born blues guitarist Kenny Wayne Shepherd, who was inspired by, and emulated the style of, Texan Stevie Ray Vaughan, can not be located through the regional blues tag. From these observations it could be assumed that categorisation with the regional blues tag, which incidentally does not feature a description unlike other labels, refers to the perception of an artist’s representation of a geographical location such as with reference to a city like Chicago (Muddy Waters) and state such as Texas (Stevie Ray Vaughan) or a separate label such as ‘British blues’ that encompasses multiple countries (Eric Clapton; Led Zeppelin).

Despite the majority of the labels referring to a blues *style*, the application of the use of the regional blues tag could be confusing to consumers if, for example, you consider Kenny Wayne Shepherd’s emulation of Stevie Ray Vaughan’s style, and when the tag is combined with how other geographical labels are applied, as in the case of Muddy Waters who was born in Mississippi but is associated with both ‘Delta Blues’ and ‘Chicago Blues’. This could indicate that location is only viewed as an important component in

blues categorisation if there is some form of direct representation of that area. Blues artists such as Paul Butterfield came to be associated with the sound of electric blues as enabled through the fact that they were born and resided in Chicago, whilst musicians such as Little Walter, who collaboratively pioneered the electric blues sound migrated to Chicago from southern locations such as Louisiana. This fact brings into question the strength of traditional associations between a geographical location and a musician in the labelling of music commodities highlighting Tina Ramnarine's (1996) assertion:

Although tradition is often perceived as stemming from and having close ties to particular localities, the relationship between tradition and place is questioned when a single tradition is maintained, developed and changed by people in several different geographic contexts (Ramnarine, 1996, p. 133).

The associations between place and tradition may be further complicated by the passing of time in which music produced in a later period may be perceived to be misrepresentative of a particular region which has strong traditional associations. Detroit was where the Mississippian John Lee Hooker crafted his electric performances prior to recording in the 1940s, and it is also noted as the birthplace of Jack White, a proponent of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One could argue that White's reimagined blues for a contemporary audience is stylistically at odds with Hooker's recordings and live performances which have been linked to the blues traditions of the past but contrarily, another argument may point to White's origin in Detroit as being a prime factor in his music bearing greater reflection of that region. Therefore, the importance of place in music categorisation in this respect is dependent on perceptual relativity and so calls into question the importance of place in music marketing practices generally. Having said that, these points highlight some of the links between performers, critics, and fans in the demarcation of blues music styles that contribute to setting listener expectations, and which could ultimately determine the level of success a music act will achieve. The default assumptions of a listener involved in this media network may incorporate ideological expectations concerning all aspects of audio, visual, and autobiographical features and as a result, professional musicians will often adopt strategies for addressing

any preconceived notions in order to achieve critical and commercial success, particularly if there is a consciousness of contribution to, and/or a reimagining of, an existing genre category (for example, see chapter five, pp. 191-196). Long-standing associations between geographical location and a blues music style (pp. 16-17) have created definitive listener expectations in the case of what became known in the early 1960s as the Delta blues, narrowly characterised by the self-accompanied Mississippi bluesman who performs with bottleneck slide on a steel-string acoustic guitar, and who sings of love, loss, and travel.

However, other geographical stylistic labels may only be applied in a contemporary context to music from a particular period. The British blues style as defined by music developments in the 1950s and 1960s consisting of electric instruments amplified for the effect of loudness is an example. Contemporary British blues musicians such as Matt Schofield and Aynsley Lister are both stylistically connected to blues on the AllMusic.com artist pages but are not recognised as ‘British blues’ despite, in the case of Aynsley Lister, a ‘modern electric blues’ label. In blues-marketed music then, a synchronic concern may be viewed to be inseparable from a geographical location as a concomitant of stylistic representation. Seasick Steve plays ‘country blues’, ‘folk-blues’, and ‘Neo-Traditional Folk’, but does not play ‘Delta blues’ according to his artist profile. Musicians active in the 1960s such as Welsh guitarist Kim Simmonds, however, *are* associated with Delta blues despite little-known links to the region. So associations made within categorisation processes between place and stylistic representation may be viewed as misleading or only useful for a certain time period within which the features defined in the epoch of a genre or style are present and adhered to. Elijah Wald (2004) makes a similar point in his exploration of the blues:

It cannot be said too often that musical categories are artificial constructs, useful for many purposes but meaningless and limiting for others. Simply because blues has been separated into all sorts of subcategories - Delta blues, Classic blues, Piedmont blues, Chicago blues, Jump blues, Rhythm & Blues - does not mean that these categories meant much to the players or consumers of the music, or

existed at the time the music was being made. Every category is defined with a set agenda in mind (Wald, 2004, p. 193).

Wald's main point here is contextualised in a period in which musicians must harness technology such as video recording equipment and the Internet either autonomously or through third parties, and additionally reimagine existing traditions in order to achieve success and remain relevant to a contemporary popular music audience. It is extremely hard to imagine that any given musician who solely performed unplugged in bars and on street corners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century could make an impact on the music industry without some degree of technological mediation. Contemporary popular music forms are globalised through such technology and the blues in a recorded commodity form can no longer be (falsely) considered as geographically isolated. Thriving blues scenes can not only be found in the USA and the UK but also in Spain (Pedro-Carañana, 2013), India (Rebello, 2015), and Japan (Pronko, 2007). However, it is only through extensive touring, performing, recording, and promotion, often sequentially documented by the performer, representatives of the performer, and fans across the Internet in various digital multimedia formats can a blues musician make any sort of impact on popular music culture. This may be evidenced in the social media posts made by the likes of Joe Bonamassa, Keb' Mo', Buddy Guy, and Walter Trout on sites such as Twitter that reflect such processes and interactions. The degree of impact may range from a global audience awareness of a particular blues act to platinum recording sales, Grammy Awards, nominations, and inductions into various Hall of Fame lists. So localised music traditions must come into contact with global cultures if a musician is to achieve some degree of worldwide success. The term 'glocal' seems appropriate here, perhaps best summarised as impacting on 'notions of cultural identify and difference' which 'are in a constant state of flux due to the dynamic interplay of the local and global' (Bennett & Dawe, 2001, p. 2). This may be best exemplified through the contemporary blues music scene in its thriving localised communities and the global reach of its most successful practitioners, but also in the contention over the demarcation of the genre, associated styles, and labelling processes.

Contemporary music production and consumption in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be characterised by the scope of music production technology, that enables almost anyone to appropriate sounds and samples from around the world and from any point in recorded history, and distribute, or listen to, a plethora of hybrid forms across the Internet. The importance of geographical location in popular music culture may perhaps be evidenced in the fact that very few emerging popular music style labels in the 21<sup>st</sup> century feature a regional reference. In this respect, one could consider all music to be world music and it is this hybridity that complicates blues music categorisation further. The data presented in Appendix 7 is illustrative of how a vast number of stylistic labels are applied to musicians connected to the blues and how perceptions of an overlap of blues with other popular music styles both related to and overlapped by sub-genres of rock, jazz, and pop, for instance, may lead to a convoluted understanding of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **A Sense of Place - Origin, Displacement, and Authenticity**

The significance of place in the perceived origins of the blues, can partly be witnessed in the efforts of contemporary musicians who may seek to produce recordings in locations such as New Orleans, Texas, and the regions around the Mississippi Delta in order to achieve a degree of authenticity and/or conjure sounds from music perceived to be associated with such regions. These efforts are motivated by the aura of authenticity that surrounds the recordings made by bluesmen in the 1920s, which is the result of ideological discourse between folklorists, record collectors, and record company professionals (see chapter two, pp. 116-122). Preconceptions that underpin such actions then are constructed on a distorted, if extremely narrow conception of the blues, and one that ignores the works of female blues singers such as Mamie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Bessie Smith who were most popular with black audiences at the time. Additionally, the musical characteristics of any given region were not historically confined to a specific place and so the simulacrum of such elements is itself a reimagining of tradition. The slide guitar technique closely associated with the Mississippi Delta region and its performers can be found outside of the region in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the music of

Blind Willie McTell from Georgia and Casey Bill Weldon from Arkansas. Additionally, the origin of the technique has been both attributed to Africa in the use of monochord zithers (Kubik, 1999, pp. 19-20) and Hawaii in the influence of touring Hawaiian musicians who visited the South as early as 1884 (Troutman, 2013, p. 32).

Folklorist Alan Lomax (1994) illustrates the itinerant nature of blues musicians in his joyful discovery of those guitarists whose paths crossed as they developed their craft proclaiming ‘now *I* felt like shouting. Son House had laid out one of the main lines in the royal lineage of America’s great guitar players - Blind Lemon of Dallas to his double in Clarksdale to Son House to Robert Johnson’ (Lomax, 1994, pp. 16-17, italics in original). The movement of musicians across regions, as they performed and learnt from other travelling blues acts, resulted in an overlapping of musical styles across geographical boundaries. This overlapping process is further complicated by the impact of nationally distributed gramophone records that would influence the stylistic development and repertoire of many young musicians who were eager to learn the latest hits of the day. Since Robert Johnson recorded *Phonograph Blues* in 1936, technology has continued to play a part in the distribution and appropriation of blues music aesthetics. Advances in radio technology supported the transatlantic call and response of blues music in the 1950s and 1960s, digital sampling processes enabled popular music artists to directly ‘borrow’ musical materials most notably in the 1980s, and since the 1990s, the Internet has broadly permitted cultural exchange and the global diffusion of music, opinion, and new market labels such as ‘African Blues’ (for discussion of technology and the development of the blues, see chapter four). These examples and aspects of globalisation illustrate the difficulty in accurately attributing musical features to a particular geographical location from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Therefore, any artistic decision to reanimate an element of tradition based on preconceived ideas regarding place and authenticity may be flawed in that it may misrepresent the music from a particular place in history entirely.

Lyrical themes in African-American popular music are suffused with references to geographical locations and living spaces that have often been used in music categorised as blues, soul, and rap to reflect the social-historical positioning of black citizens in

America. Hip-hop scholar Murray Forman (2012) has stressed the importance of acknowledging ‘that there are different messages being communicated to listeners who occupy different spaces and places and who identify with space or place according to different values of scale’ and that such practices, deemed crucial to hip-hop culture, offer ‘a means through which to view both the ways that spaces and places are constructed and the kinds of spaces or places that are constructed’ (Forman, 2012, pp. 267, 249). Adam Krims (2007) has also shown how hip-hop has, at various points in time, articulated ‘the fears and pleasures of the black, inner-city ghetto that both fascinated and horrified rap fans’ (Krims, 2007, p. 112).

Historically, an African American’s location played a large part in how they were treated in society as different states had their own segregation laws and so it was possible to change one’s status by moving to a different location (see chapter two, pp. 89-91).

Specific locations, such as Mississippi are also closely associated with the blues due to the violence inflicted on black citizens in the past (see pp. 32-34) and for authors such as Amiri Baraka (1995) and Samuel Floyd (1996) only black musicians from a particular geographical region and of a certain socio-economic status can play blues music authentically (for example, see p. 11-13). The essentialist viewpoint highlights the associations made between geographical position and the struggle of black people in the US to regain pride and identity after emancipation.

John Hammond received praise for his efforts to bring the culture of African Americans into an integrated spotlight as demonstrated by the *Spiritual to Swing Concert* in 1938, but also had a number of preconceptions regarding race and geographical location as he sought and marketed ‘authentic’ African-American musicians from Georgia, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, and the Carolinas, and musicians who had no formal music training and who had never played to a white audience prior to performing in front of a black audience (Wald, 2004, pp. 227-229). Blues musicians such as Blind Lemon Jefferson have long since been praised by blues authors such as Evans (2000) for the virtuosity, lyrics, and song titles that are understood to directly *represent* everyday life and the environment in the South at that time and which had a mainstream influence on popular music tradition (Evans, 2000, pp. 87-88). John Hammond’s preconception of the

association of place with African-American performers is also later reflected in Alan Lomax's actions at the 1966 Newport Folk Festival. In order to make southern musicians feel at home and obtain desirable performances Lomax constructed a stage space designed to simulate a rural juke joint as found in Mississippi (Alan Lomax Archive, 2018), whilst at the same time, people in the South were ironically being murdered for driving to change such conditions.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an aura of authenticity surrounds not only blues, jazz, and hip-hop but more recent music genres and styles that have established a foothold in the commercial mainstream of the United States including reggaeton in which artists draw upon reggae, hip-hop, and numerous Spanish Caribbean styles to articulate 'street life' as proof of authenticity. From its origins in Puerto Rico in the late 1990s to its importation into the mainland consumption of the US, reggaeton promotes a Latin American cultural identity through communication of localised significations and descriptions of urban spaces in the Spanish language (Rivera, Marshall & Pacini Hernandez, 2009; Rivera-Rideau, 2015).

Whilst new styles and genres continue to emerge, the association between a sense of place and blues music culture is preserved by the Mississippi Blues Commission which offers an extensive tour around the 'home of the blues' promoting the 'authentic experience' (King, 2004, p. 455). Such experiences perpetuate the conceptions of the blues that link music, a sense of place, and authenticity, if only through aesthetic engagement with an anamorphic environment that involves visitors in the traditions of the past. A touristic perception of authentic blues music in this context may be subsumed by the aesthetics of the setting and the overall satisfaction had from such an experience. Ethnomusicologist Holly Wissler (2015) draws attention to this subject-related mode of authenticity in her definition of 'performative authenticity':

Performative authenticity...is the combination of preconceptions that conjure up images and sensations with the subjective inner affected experience and existential personal quests that happen in the moment. In simpler terms, the projected combined with the experiences (Wissler, 2015, p. 408).

In order to satisfy consumers then, the Mississippi Blues Commission must meet the expectations of visitors, as is the requirement of any form of touristic operation, and therefore it is argued that blues tourism must conform to the ideological expectations concerned with the traditions of the past in blues music history. In *Music and Tourism: On the Road Again*, Chris Gibson and John Conell (2005) provide examples of how jazz in the tourist areas of New Orleans is perceived by locals to be commercialised and inauthentic, and in Jamaica where musicians repeatedly perform similarly inauthentic and familiar sounds and styles for tourists every day (Gibson & Conell, 2005, p. 142).

Wissler (2015) has noted that performances of indigenous music that are commodified for touristic purposes often become 'self-conscious cultural performances' but insists, through her grassroots level work on the Q'eros in the Peruvian Andes, that authentic 'unpacked' performances that do not conform to tourist projections and preconceived ideas, still exist (Wissler, 2015, p. 405).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, advances in technology facilitate and increase the frequency with which the detachment of music and sound from a locale and time takes place.

Ethnomusicologist Ken McLeod (2016) provides an example in his study on the holographic performance of the hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur illustrating both how 'the separation between virtual environments and the physical world has been significantly eroded' and how notions of real time, place, and space continue to be refused in contemporary hip-hop (McLeod, 2016, p. 110). Authorship is of course another factor impacted on by advances in technology, and processes of appropriation are commonly employed in popular culture. Further, such processes are to a large extent embraced in a postmodern context, particularly in digital music styles that explicitly promote hybridity. Societies originally represented by music in this process, can be seen to relinquish the power in their 'believed' ownership of cultural artefacts, as individuals or other societies acquire power through musical appropriation (Bohlman, 2005, p. 223), and as sociomusicologist Simon Frith (1996) has previously suggested 'while music may be *shaped* by the people who first make and use it, as experience it has a life of its own' and 'musics made in one place for one reason can be immediately appropriated in another place for quite another reason' (Frith, 1996, p. 109).

Acts of cultural appropriation that articulate a sense of place may also draw upon and communicate both global and localised significations. Usama Kahf (2012) states that hip-hop is both appropriated around the world and transformed by localised artists as it enables them to voice their frustration ‘with everything about the status quo’ and whilst these indigenous artists acknowledge the origins of hip-hop in African-American culture, ‘the common experience of being oppressed that they share with blacks in the west [*sic*] inspires them to break the musical norms of their societies and give birth to a new hybrid genre of music’ (Kahf, 2012, p. 117). Jaqueline Lima Santos (2016) highlights this in a paper on the emergence and development of hip-hop in the late 1970s in the city of São Paulo in Brazil. Through black parties including those in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, a sense of the diaspora is noted to have spread as the black population grew united and black power consciousness expanded. Santos argues that in this context, hip-hop served ‘as an instrument of social transformation’ for young victims of urban racial and class violence (Santos, 2016, pp. 164, 167-168). Griff Rollefson’s (2017) exploration of hip-hop also shows how European hip-hop artists ‘seize on commercialized forms of black American culture to elaborate their own affiliations with the lived realities and mediatized images of African American struggle, gain visibility in their own local and national contexts, and ultimately reterritorialize the music and politics to suit their own exigencies’ (Rollefson, 2017, p. 5). Such examples of glocalisation then may take aspects of US-based hip-hop such as rhythmic figures and combine them with aspects of localised culture which may include specific instrumentation and/or language.

Local spaces and the generation of a sense of such through acts of music production are important to musicians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Arts journalist and scholar Don McLeese (2008) detailed in his study how in the aftermath of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans musicians flocked back to the area, citing the creative inspiration that could be drawn from the region as reason enough to return. The study also highlighted that many of the musicians produced acclaimed recordings in the months that followed the disaster (McLeese, 2008, pp. 213, 219). Whilst there are a number of reasons why both uprooted residents may return to a particular area and recordings are considered successful, particularly after a performer has experienced some degree of

tragedy, audio samples, stylistic techniques, and musical figures *do* provide an immediate sense of place for listeners (Turino, 2014), and so this does give credence to the actions of the musicians in McLeese's study.

However, there is a significant element of romanticism associated with how blues music, and in particular what became known as the Delta blues, has come to be widely understood in relation to the geographical origins of the genre, and as Marybeth Hamilton (2009) suggests 'what makes the Delta blues singular, and paradoxical, is its magical capacity to transcend that technology, to be conveyed mechanically and yet be perceived as pristinely untouched by the modern world' (Hamilton, 2009, p. 9). Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the perpetuation of widely held beliefs and preconceptions of blues enthusiasts, folklorists, and record collectors that the blues is in some way isolated from the global context within which all musical materials could and continue to be shared and emulated for contrasting audience groups, illustrate how geographical location can play a significant part in the discourses of cultural value and genre creation.

## **Place in Society**

Segregation still exists in parts of the Mississippi Delta region today, where a proportion of the population reside in poverty-stricken areas and attend schools and places of worship that reflect diverging traditions stemming from the period around the conclusion of the Civil War. In a sociological study on the lasting impact of segregation on African Americans, Ruth Thompson-Miller, Joe R. Feagin, and Leslie H. Picca (2015) state that 'the racially violent experiences of Jim Crow are still profoundly affecting and shaping the lives of older African Americans in individual and collective ways' and that racial power structures still persist as perceptible signs of racism 'are often operative behind a façade of color-blind organizational policies' (Thompson-Miller, Feagin & Picca, 2015, pp. 14, 193, 196). Despite the global popularity of blues music and its exploration of universal themes that some scholars (Gussow, 2006; King, 2004) suggest promote racial harmony and integration in spaces and places closely associated with the origins of the blues, the history of popular music has shown that African-American performers and

creators have often been financially subjugated as the social meanings and cultural expressions of music performances are reimagined or lost in processes of appropriation. Wald (2004) points to the importance of place and time in the artistic decision-making of blues music performance:

A young black man from New York or Colorado - or even from Mississippi - who is trying to sound like someone from his grandfather's time may well produce a better simulacrum than a young white man trying to do the same thing, and the quest for a personal heritage may provide links that the quest to master a foreign language does not. Nonetheless, it remains a fundamentally different effort from playing the music of one's own time and place (Wald, 2004, p. 255).

In Wald's view then, a sense of time is paramount to an understanding of blues music performance and more so than a sense of place or racial definition. George Lipsitz (2006) also highlights the importance of time but raises the experiential access argument linked to race when comparing blues music performances stating that 'while both artists faced their share of difficulties in life, on his best day Robert Johnson caught more hell than Clapton has ever imagined' (Lipsitz, 2006, p. 121).

The empowering and motivational qualities of music in the African-American community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ensures that it remains a powerful form of social representation and one in which themes of place may be drawn upon to recall the lived experiences of the past and mobilised to combat racism in a contemporary context. Themes of place may even point to an imagined future in Afrofuturist practice in which 'history is, in one particular sense, what is remembered, and thus also what is repeated' (Steinskog, 2018, p. 217). Erik Steinskog (2018) highlights the example of Sun Ra who once claimed to be from Saturn and therefore from another place. Steinskog understands Sun Ra's way of thinking as leading to the possibility of sounds not only from another place but by implication from another time (Steinskog, 2018, pp. 217-218). Of course, many African-American musicians rarely or never included in Afrofuturist discourse can be perceived to be reimagining a better future both inherently in their music and

extrinsically as they fulfil roles as global performers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the media spotlight.

Many high-profile popular music artists such as Beyoncé, Pharrell Williams, and Alicia Keys have all reacted publicly to the police shootings of black residents and/or the subsequent protests by social activist groups such as Ferguson Action and Black Lives Matter, in areas such as Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City, demonstrating that music plays an integral part in the response of such movements to community grievances. New Orleans author William T. Hoston (2016) refers to the ‘Stand Your Ground’ law, that permits citizens to use their guns when they ‘reasonably believe it is necessary’ to prevent bodily harm, as having ‘become an anti-black law to legitimize the killing of black males’ (Hoston, 2016, p. 23). Over the period between 2005 and 2011, the law had been enacted in states including Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Texas. The law and its geographical enactment has thus, been seen by some as controversial. Florida in particular, as one of the earliest states to enact the law, has been criticised by gun prevention groups such as the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. Floridians have also seen self-defence claims triple in the years following the 2005 enactment of the law (CBS, 2012). Evidently, a person’s geographical location could have a bearing on the way one thinks and behaves in a volatile situation, and how one is judged in a court of law, depending on state jurisdiction.

As demonstrated in chapter two (for example, pp. 101-104), black communities may be bonded through common economic and geographic conditions and Tricia Rose (1994) draws specific attention to socio-economic factors and by implication, to location in her conceptualisation of the beginnings of hip-hop:

Hip-hop emerged from the deindustrialization meltdown where social alienation, prophetic imagination, and yearning intersect. Hip-hop is a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the Experiences [*sic*] of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppression within the cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity, and community. It is the tension between the cultural fractures produced by postindustrial oppression and the binding ties of

black cultural expressivity that sets the critical frame for the development of hip-hop (Rose, 1994, p. 21).

More recently, ethnomusicologist Catherine Appert (2016) has examined how Senegalese musicians turn to hip-hop ‘to come to terms with the trials of daily life in the *banlieue* and in the popular quarters of Dakar, a city whose disjunct spatiality, a result of colonial racialized urban planning and the failures of a corrupt postcolonial socialism, resonates with globalized hip hop narratives of the US inner city’ (Appert, 2016, p. 255). Shared socio-economic experiences that resonate across the globe therefore provide the basis on which oppressed individuals and communities may find characteristics of music forms such as hip-hop as particularly appealing, and as Appert argues, through rap, the youth in Africa use their ‘lived experience to reformulate the relationship between Africa and the West’ (Appert, 2016, p. 241).

In contrast to the suppressed voices of southern African Americans in the plantation era, for instance, individuals and communities now have the power to broadcast all feelings, disputes, and protestations in the public to a global audience via online social media. Texan blues guitarist Gary Clark Jr demonstrated this in expressing his outrage at the police shooting of Philando Castile in Minnesota, to nearly 100,000 followers on his Twitter account feed with an expletive tweet in July 2016, and has since reiterated his bewilderment to the online community in stating ‘we’re being honored and slaughtered at the same time’ (Clark, 2016). In addition to producing similarly politically charged songs with titles including *Marching on Ferguson*, musicians such as Tom Morello frequently post messages (to over half a million followers in this case) concerned with a diverse range of subjects from political dissatisfaction to the celebration of ethnic minorities, perhaps best summarised in the hashtags at the end of such posts for example ‘#nobodyforpresident’ and ‘#happyindiginousday’ (Morello, 2016). In this sense, combined technological and sociological factors can be seen to be strengthening the associations made between geographical position, race, and music. Political groups can be seen to be propelled by music with messages presented in explicit ways and vice versa, and the social conditions of a specific place are also noted to have an impact on how consumers listen and respond to music.

The use of music as social empowerment and political change, particularly in stratified areas; contrasting and controversial state laws; and the excessive enforcement of such laws exhibited by authoritative forces, are familiar aspects within those geographical regions associated with the blues epoch. It could then be suggested that structural hierarchies in certain regions of the United States are monolithic when the same sociological aspects are compared, within the plantation, reconstruction, and Civil Rights eras of American history. Through examination of the contribution a sense of place makes to perceptions of blues music, this study has highlighted both some of the key questions that surround an interpretation of blues music culture and blues music style in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the factors that complicate stylistic labelling and a sense of place as it relates to origin and displacement.

## Chapter 4: Reimagining Popular Sound

### Introduction

The aim of this work is to contextualise and demonstrate the extent to which technology has played a role in the development of blues culture from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how such has shaped a contemporary understanding of blues-marketed music in order to illustrate the links to the traditions of the past. Through this process, it is argued that technology has and continues to play a central role in a reimagining of the blues through both instrumentation and sound manipulation, and listening formats and distribution. The work also demonstrates how notions of authenticity have constrained the blues as a popular mass-market label through manifestations in emergent forms of technology and the discourse surrounding such. In focusing on technology and the associated changes in music style, a blues typology can be defined as follows: sheet music publication and formalisation of blues music (1890-1920), mass media blues (1920-1939), amplification and early Chicago blues (1930s-1940s), Chicago blues, British blues and the first revival (1950s-1960s), blues-rock (1970s), second blues revival (1980s-1990s), and 21<sup>st</sup>-century blues and third revival (2000-2010s). However, structuring the chapter using this chronological typology yields excessive repetition and so aspects of sound mediation instead inform the headings within this work that enable each stage in the song production process, from sender to receiver, to be highlighted more adequately through appraisal of advancements in technology.

The role technology has played in the creation of recorded music artefacts has been seldom addressed in studies on the aesthetics of popular music forms, as key works in the watershed of analysis of recorded popular song such as *The Foundations of Rock: from "Blue suede shoes" to "Suite: Judy blue eyes"* by Walter Everett (2009) and Allan F. Moore's *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song* (2012) are primarily engaged with the compositional elements of music rather than the mediating technologies that give rise and enable such to be heard. One notable exception includes

*Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience* by American studies scholar Steve Waksman (2001) who invites readers to consider why the potentiality of sound, and more specifically the electric guitar as a tool of social and cultural transformation, has not been realised. Waksman's concerns are shared by ethno-organologist Kevin Dawe who in *The New Guitarscape in Critical Theory, Cultural Practice and Musical Performance* (2010) argues for the full effects of globalisation exhibited in social, cultural, and technological developments to be considered in a reassessment of the role of the guitar in studies concerned with ethnomusicology and organology.

In a broader context, ethnomusicologist Eliot Bates (2016; 2012) has drawn further attention to the role objects, specifically musical instruments and the recording studios that often house them, have played and continue to play in contemporary processes of music production, arguing for 'the study of the social life of musical instruments' in which 'instruments are entangled in webs of complex relationships - between humans and objects, between humans and humans, and between objects and other objects' (Bates, 2012, p. 364). Paul Gilroy (2010) has also noted the neglected issue of the study of the history and phenomenology of the electric guitar as part of African-American culture that is understood to define 'a pivotal point where music making became a matter of electronic sound' and showed 'how innovations derived from military research found peaceful uses in the emergent realm of musical sound-processing technology' (Gilroy, 2010, p. 140). As noted in the contextual framework (pp. 14-16), the intersection of technology and race is a key theme in Afrofuturist discourse and as Erik Steinskog (2018) suggests, 'with the constant presence of electricity, another future is presented and preconfigured' as musicians move 'back and forth between tradition and modernity, between blues and sonic experimentation' (Steinskog, 2018, p. 182). Afrofuturist scholar Nettrice Gaskins (2016) has drawn attention to the concept of 'black vernacular technological creativity', as outlined by Rayvon Fouché, and which encompasses processes of 're-deployment (reappropriation), re-conception (improvisation), and re-creation (reinvention) as a basis for creativity and innovation' (Gaskins, 2016, p. 31). These processes are evidenced throughout this chapter and indeed throughout this thesis in which the cultural implications of sound technology are contextualised both within the

blues-marketed genre and further so in related genres such as hip-hop and Afrofuturist practices, and in doing so I aim to address the areas of concern noted above.

Whilst the main technological focus in this work revolves around those performance types associated with the guitar, it was not the most popular instrument in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Blues history revisionist Elijah Wald (2004) suggests black Southern musicians predominately played the fiddle but were discouraged by white recording industry professionals in the 1920s from doing so as fiddle pieces sold in greater quantities to white audiences, and that even by 1924 the piano and trumpet were still the preferred accompaniment to recorded vocals until Ma Rainey and Sara Martin began recording with guitarists (Wald, 2004, pp. 47, 26). Despite this, the guitar remains one of, if not *the* instrument most closely associated with blues music, playing a pivotal role in the development of blues music and subsequent popular music styles. Innovative equipment designs have provided the sonic tools for hugely successful performing musicians, who have inspired and influenced subsequent generations of listeners who would contribute to the genre as blues music fans and/or as performers aiming to craft an ‘original’ style that both retained traditional appealing stylistic elements and harnessed new technologies that would interest new and younger audiences.

Although instrumentation is a crucially important constitutive element in the development of blues-marketed music, it represents only one stage of the creation-to-consumption process of music making and listening. Blues recordings and performances were distributed to an increasingly larger audience as both broadcast technology and recording mediums improved over time, and so additionally this work addresses those particular aspects and how such technological advances were both, perceived in, and impacted on local, national, and international communities. Building upon the concept originally defined by Andrew Ross (1991), René Lysloff and Leslie Gay (2003) extend the definition of an ethnomusicology of ‘technoculture’, that refers to emergent communities, and cultural forms characterised by ‘technological adaption, avoidance, subversion, or resistance’ in the face of changing media and information technologies, to concern ‘how technology implicates cultural practices involving music’ (Lysloff & Gay,

2003, p. 2). Forms of technology and the industries that manufacture such, therefore, do not only convey the technical and economic context in which music is created but are the *prerequisites* to contemporary music culture. Instrumental to this understanding of a technocultural world are musicologist Paul Théberge's (1997) 'continuous' and 'transectorial' aspects of technological innovation and change, the former characterised by the dependencies of small creative firms and large corporations as result of a rapid rate of technological change, the latter characterised by the interdependence of disparate companies as innovations in one industrial sector may be utilised in another unrelated sector (Théberge in Lysloff & Gay, 2003, p. 14). As Lysloff and Gay (2003) illustrate, many societies are heavily dependent on transectorial and interdependent regimes of technology, and many technologies such as the audio technologies that gave rise to the recording industry, which transformed music into a commodity and which alienated audiences from the social processes of musical performance but which also enabled individuals to listen to a far greater amount of musical material, may be seen as both good and bad. As this chapter will show, the technologies that drive change in the consumption formats of music, in addition to many of the other areas discussed also highlight this dichotomous nature.

Both a historical and contemporary understanding of blues music comes only through such stages of technological mediation that enable a listener to consume any given blues performance. Musicologist Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen (2010) has categorised mediating processes involved in music production into four areas: the initial mediation of the sound materials (including the human voice, instruments, and samplers), the forms of mediation used to record and edit sounds (such as microphones, amplifiers, and mixing consoles), phonograms and media formats (LP, CD, mp3, etc), and the medium of distribution which may include speakers, format readers, and the listening context (Brøvig-Hanssen, 2010, p. 160). Brøvig-Hanssen's main concerns are in elucidating how technological mediation impacts on the aesthetics of recorded popular music and whilst her primary focus is digital mediation, her categorisation of technological mediation can be broadly applied to the development of blues music from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to present-day forms and associated mediating processes. Whilst acknowledging that each category overlaps, as for instance radio may be described as both a format and a medium of distribution, it is

deemed necessary to refine Brøvig-Hanssen's model. The initial mediation process in this instance makes some reference to both instrumentation *and* the impact of amplification (the latter of which Brøvig-Hanssen includes in her second stage), as guitar amplification is a crucial component of the initial sound mediation process when an electric guitar is utilised, and an amplifier is most frequently encountered and manipulated prior to any monitoring and adjustment performed on a recording platform in the audio signal chain. It is also important to broaden the second stage of Brøvig-Hanssen's definition to accommodate the role of the producer in the recording and manipulation of sound as such impacts on how the conceptualisation of each artefact is realised in the recording process and critically how consumers may respond.

## Instrumentation

...the guitar is a voice like no other. The guitar is a miracle. Out of the strings and the frets comes this personality whether a blind man from Texas or a Gypsy from Belgium - of a unique human being (B.B. King in Narváez, 2001, p. 28).

The guitar can be said to have found its own solo voice in the instrumental recordings made in 1923 by Sylvester Weaver billed as 'The man with the talking guitar'. The songs *Guitar Blues* and *Guitar Rag* are frequently identified as the first instrumental blues pieces that incorporated the slide guitar technique, now synonymous with blues music. In fact, making the guitar 'talk' was common practice amongst early 20<sup>th</sup>-century blues musicians whose engagement in such was 'drawn from the sonic environment that directly surrounded them: chugging trains, baying hounds, yelping foxes, and the like' (Gussow, 2002, p. 105). The continuous *glissando* permitted through such technique enabled blues musicians to imitate vocal gestures and articulate an emotional code in performance and which has been likened to vocal communication code in psychological studies (Juslin & Laukka, 2003). These qualities made the technique and resultant timbre an effective means by which to engage in the call and response approach of blues, utilising the instrument as a co-leading participatory 'voice' in the arrangement. Since

the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the guitar has maintained this position in relation to the lead vocal within blues music history in both its acoustic and electric forms and has at various times taken precedence over the lead vocal, to a wide range of subjective responses from consumers and critics. Through both technological advances in manufacturing that lead to new instrument designs and a history of cross-cultural use, the guitar has become imbued with social meaning.

In the 1920s instrument manufacturers such as Martin (founded by the German-born luthier Christian Frederick Martin in 1833) began to shed European influences and started adopting their own designs and features including the X-bracing positioned inside the top of the guitar body to improve the structural stability of the instrument and permit the use of steel strings as opposed to strings made from gut that were predominately used up until that point. Orville H. Gibson, who founded the rival guitar company Gibson in 1902, started manufacturing flat-top guitars in response to the Martin product line beginning with the L-1 in 1926, a model famously pictured in the hands of Robert Johnson in the mid-1930s (Bacon, 2012, pp. 28, 54). These technological advances were made not only to improve playability but more importantly, to allow acoustic guitarists to provide accompaniment at a volume level that could be heard when performing in music ensembles. Such advances in guitar technology are linked to a perceived need for increased amplitude that set a precedent for future technological developments in subsequent decades. Blues musicians including Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Willie McTell and Blind Blake performed and recorded a broad range of material such as ragtime and minstrel tunes in addition to 'blues' songs that were most sought after by record companies and therefore it was imperative to make use of the latest technological developments in order to be continually well-received. The incorporation of the slide guitar technique is an early example of how musicians reimagined the blues through absorption of a stylistic attribute of a popular form in the US at the time, namely Hawaiian music which also created an increased demand for lap steel and resonator guitar designs.

In a stylistically broader context and in the pre-war period the majority of guitarists, including those who wielded the 'Spanish' type, were struggling to be heard amongst big-

band jazz orchestras popular at the time, leading to the development of the first electric guitar, the Rickenbacker 'Frying Pan' in 1931 by George Beauchamp (Bacon, 2012, pp. 78-79). A short time later in 1938, the electric guitar was featured in recordings made by Big Bill Broonzy, although it was a 16-year-old white jazz guitarist George Barnes who provided the electric guitar accompaniment and not Broonzy himself on the songs *Sweetheart Land* and *It's a Low Down Dirty Shame*. Whilst African-American musicians such as Eddie Durham had recorded electric guitar before Charlie Christian, it was Christian's single-string style established in his solo work with the Benny Goodman Sextet between 1939 and 1941, which established the amplified guitar as a credible solo instrument. Christian utilised what is considered the world's first commercially available Spanish-style electric guitar the Gibson ES-150, introduced in 1936 marking the beginning of a range of electric instruments produced by the company including the ES-300 (1940) and the ES-175 (1949). The P-90 single coil pickup developed by Gibson after the war in 1946 was featured on many of the ES models manufactured from this point onwards and produced a harmonically rich and aggressive tonal quality. Gibson's future main competitor Clarence 'Leo' Fender had also been developing his single coil pickup designs and installing them in lap steel guitars in the 1940s prior to the establishment of the Fender Musical Instruments Corporation in 1946. Once established, the California based company quickly incorporated the mass production techniques of the day leading to successful solid-body variants such as the Telecaster (1950) and Stratocaster (1954), models to which Gibson responded with its first commercially available solid-body the Gibson Les Paul (1952) following inventor Les Paul's initial experiments with semi-solid instruments such as the 'Log' prototype guitar built in 1940 (Bacon, 2012, pp. 82-83).

Texan blues guitarist T-Bone Walker, who had often performed with Christian as his playing partner around 1933, was also utilising amplified guitars by 1940 and his performances proved to be highly influential to subsequent generations including B.B. King who once stated 'when I was coming up, T-Bone Walker was the latest cool thing. I wanted to play like him, not like Robert Johnson' (King, 1997, p. 204). The contemporary sound of the electric guitar playing of Walker on influential recordings such as *Mean Old World* in 1942, as opposed to the acoustic orientated sound of earlier

rural blues music, led to widespread acclaim, earning him numerous titles including ‘the father of modern lead guitar’ (Evans, 2000, p. 101). The use of amplification meant that blues music could be performed in larger ballrooms to bigger audiences and by a smaller combination of musicians, which may have been important, considering the shortage of manpower that resulted from the US entry into World War II. It is clear that without embracing such advances in technology, the largely monophonic style pioneered by Christian and Walker would not have entered the blues vocabulary, or at least would not have been heard, and so even 50 years after the epoch, the blues was still being reimagined by performers looking to embrace the latest technological and stylistic developments.

Advances in sound were linked to experiences with new and evolving environments and may most clearly be exemplified in what is labelled as Chicago blues and defined by the early recordings of those Mississippians who settled in Chicago in the 1940s and 1950s, such as Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Jimmy Reed, and Willie Dixon, as part of the Great Migration. In contrast to the rural South, the urban environment of Chicago was comparatively noisy and musicians felt the need to utilise electric instruments and amplification not only to be heard but also in order to make an impression on audiences. Muddy Waters was quick to realise this, utilising high amounts of amplifier gain and distortion in projecting his electric slide guitar tone, and his live performances featuring Little Walter, who had developed a reputation for amplifying his harmonica since his arrival in Chicago in 1945, contributed greatly to the Chicago blues sound. The increase in amplitude led other musicians to raise the levels of their instruments in order to ‘compete’ on stage. The unique timbre created by Muddy Waters’s early group, that also included Jimmy Rodgers (guitar), Willie Dixon (bass), Otis Spann (Piano), and Elgin Evans (drums), spurred a large number of musicians to follow suit; and the popularity of recordings such as *Hoochie Coochie Man* and *I Just Want to Make Love To You* recorded by Muddy Waters in 1954 (both written by Willie Dixon) proved influential to musicians from elsewhere, who were inspired to head to Chicago (Palmer, 1982, p. 167). From the late 1950s, bass players also switched from using acoustic upright double bass to electric bass guitars and by the early 1960s the sound of electric Chicago blues had been well defined. Loudness was one way in which musicians and their respective groups could

make an impact on audiences to obtain a greater share of the work, and the competition was so fierce that some bluesmen such as Earl Hooker needed to work for tips whilst others including Johnny Shines and J.B. Lenoir squeezed onto the smallest of stages in order to establish a reputation in the area.

The choice of instrumentation and resultant timbres associated with Chicago blues proved to be a point of contention in the US and abroad as not all audiences found the reimagined sounds aesthetically pleasing. In Britain, an understanding of the blues had been shaped by successful visits to England by Big Bill Broonzy in 1951 and 1952 where he performed with an acoustic guitar in folk clubs and jazz clubs, after encouragement from jazz musician Chris Barber. As one of the early pioneers of Chicago blues, Broonzy had utilised electric instruments since the 1940s but was encouraged by audiences in the US and the UK to revert back to acoustic instrumentation. Acoustic instrumentation is noted by Palmer (1982, p. 257) to have appealed to listeners and musicians associated with skiffle in the UK, as skiffle was also based on the acoustic guitar and washboard percussion. Muddy Waters was unaware of this technological preference on his first visit to England in 1958, initially shocking audiences with his heavily amplified guitar tone but then returned in 1962 without an amplifier to find listeners were clamouring for a louder electric performance (Oliver, 1997, p. 4).

More significantly by the late 1950s, a new popular critical infrastructure had emerged as part of the American folk-music revival (pp. 5-6). Contributors to the revival and organisers of festivals such as the Newport Folk Festival perceived the utilisation of electric instruments by blues musicians such as John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters as inauthentic and instead lauded the earlier acoustic recordings of artists including Mississippi John Hurt, Josh White, and Blind Lemon Jefferson. The mythology surrounding performers such as Robert Johnson increased the interest of white audiences, and rural blues recordings made by folklorists such as Alan Lomax were repackaged and rereleased. Whilst African-American musicians reimagined the blues in expanding the boundaries through experiments with new technology, white folk revivalists and record collectors of the time constrained and demarcated blues music to the point that they

‘invented’ the blues as a mass-market label (see chapter two, pp. 114-122) and the resulting tension from this dichotomy will be illustrated in more detail later on, but it is important to note that folk ideology concerned with authenticity largely defined blues music instrumentation in the minds of listeners from this point onward.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the guitar remains an important component of the blues community not only for its utilisation in the performance of music but also in how musicians can form social bonds through discourse concerned with such technology, as Huey Morgan from the popular group Fun Lovin’ Criminals explains when meeting B.B. King for the first time during the production of a Jools Holland show:

He called me over and he just handed me Lucille (B.B. King’s guitar) and took my guitar. So I’m holding Lucille, like flat out trying not to drop it and he said, ‘son, hold it like a woman’. So he starts playing my guitar and says ‘what is this?’ and I say ‘it’s the blues, Mr King’. He says, ‘no, what kind of guitar is it?’ It’s a Chet Atkins. ‘I know Chet Atkins, sit around and watch, man’. So I’m kind of in shock as well. He says, ‘I really like what you did on that last number, that was blues’ (Elliott, 2015).

The notion of vintage equipment, established in the 1970s, influenced and continues to influence the decision-making of up-and-coming blues musicians, as a nationwide obsession with equipment and tone seemed to reveal itself in US guitar magazines such as *Guitar World* (first published in 1980). In addition to printing music transcriptions of popular songs and articles on improving instrumental technique, successful musicians would reveal what equipment they utilised in interviews and were often encouraged to discuss the type of plectrums they used, cable manufacturer and string gauge. Specific articles on equipment settings would also be included with illustrations of the effect pedals used and the order in which they were set up in the signal chain between the guitar and amplifier. This obsession with equipment was fuelled by manufacturers who would seek out future endorsees, produce signature models and fill popular magazines with product advertisements. As the often perceived ‘root’ of the majority of contemporary

popular music forms and as a symbol of authenticity, the equipment used in recorded blues performances remains highly desirable to those musicians who seek to possess an ‘authentic’ sound quality which echoes the past. Contemporary blues guitarists such as Joe Bonamassa, Gary Clark Jr and Derek Trucks adhere to tried-and-tested instrument designs and in the case of Bonamassa possess an almost unhealthy obsession with vintage equipment as evidenced by his own postings on social media platforms such as Twitter.

A glance at the most popular Billboard blues albums (Billboard, 2018a) reveals that the instrumentation utilised in such is largely restricted to that defined by Chicago blues groups in the 1950s and 1960s. Further still, *Blue and Lonesome* by the Rolling Stones and *British Blues Explosion Live* by Joe Bonamassa are almost explicitly focused on the Chicago blues period, the former album is comprised of blues songs written by Little Walter, Howlin’ Wolf, and Willie Dixon and the latter is inspired by the early work of Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page. Whilst these instances also highlight the transatlantic exchange which largely occurred in and from the same period, new blues-influenced guitar bands have emerged in this century and found commercial success receiving Grammy nominations and awards including Alabama Shakes (2013-2016), The Black Keys (2011-2015), and The White Stripes (2003-2007). As shown above, the guitar and the blues are inextricably tied together, and in addition to the harmonica and piano as less widely associated instruments, the guitar is a key tool in reimagining the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the initial stage of technological mediation. However, in an age where the laptop computer has been described as the ‘folk instrument of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (Soundbreaking, 2016), the previously clear divisions between live performance, sound recording, editing, and mixing are blurred through the embracement of contemporary music technology that provides even greater possibilities for reimagining the blues.

As indicated in the introduction, whilst the guitar is closely associated with the production of blues-marketed performances and recordings, other instruments have also been utilised in the production of blues music in the past and present. Further still, in contemporary forms such as hip-hop, new uses of audio technologies have led to devices

such as the turntable, which was originally designed for solely listening to music, being reconfigured as an instrument, as new demands were placed on such by pioneering rap artists such as Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and DJ Kool Herc from the 1970s onwards. This example of Afrofuturism illustrates both how ‘technologies may change in meaning as they cross national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries’ and how ‘technologies also become saturated with social meaning as they acquire a history of use’ (Lysloff & Gay 2003, pp. 8, 10). Through the backward and forward movement of a pre-existing recording and record scratching techniques, this pioneering development not only placed the recording at the centre of hip-hop performance, and in so doing challenging notions of authorship and originality (Bartlett, 2012), but through uses of the turntable in Afrofuturist works such as *Sound System* (1984) and *Perfect Machine* (1987) by the respected experimental jazz artist Herbie Hancock ‘illustrated to audiences that the turntable was indeed an instrument, and the DJ a musician’ (De Paor-Evans, 2018, p. 128). European hip-hop scholar Griffith Rollefson (2017) argues that we can ‘move past the musicological ideology of the “musical object” toward an understanding of music as performance—even if that performance is crafted, (temporarily) fixed, and etched in a musical score or the grooves of a vinyl LP, or digitally encoded into an mp3’ (Rollefson, 2007, p. 10), and attention will now be given to the processes that give rise to ‘music as performance’.

## **Recording, Editing & Mixing**

Beyond sound manipulation and realisation achieved using the immediate ‘voice’, whether through vocal and/or instrumental means, black blues musicians at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were largely prevented from accessing recording equipment and so they had very little say in what was recorded and even less control over how each performance was captured. As white performers and record company representatives had almost exclusive access to the works of African-American composers who were barred from recording studios (Miller, 2010, p. 136), decision-making in the recording process lay with white citizens and largely remained that way for more than half a century. Prior to

the formalisation of blues around the 1910s, only spirituals and novelty tunes had been recorded by black vocal ensembles, who hoped to appeal to a white audience, and by 1914 when blues suddenly became popular, no one had previously thought of recording black artists for black audiences. Up until this time, blues material had been recorded by whites using a black dialect, and the first jazz recording of 1917 was produced in this way, that is by a white group the Original Dixieland Jass Band who had developed their sound listening to black musicians (Palmer, 1982, p. 106).

The 1920 recording of *Crazy Blues*, written by the African-American composer Perry Bradford and sung by vaudeville performer Mamie Smith, was not the first recording with the word 'blues' in the title, but it is widely considered the first blues title recorded by a black female singer. Released on a gramophone record by Okeh records, *Crazy Blues* sold 75,000 copies within a month and over 1 million copies in six months (Gioia, 2009, p. 38), and opened the doors for the recording of black musicians, as record companies looked to capitalise on its success by seeking other idiomatic singers such as Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Charley Patton, as a black consumer group was revealed. In Adam Gussow's (2006) blues music typology, *Crazy Blues* marks the beginning of the period between 1920 and 1960, defined as 'black American pop music with a white minority audience' (Gussow, 2006, p. 40).

Interestingly, it was not until blues music had become established as popular that the term folk blues started to be used. Music historian Karl Hagstrom Miller (2010) notes this shift in recognition in the work of sociologists Howard W. Odum and Guy Johnson who in 1925 viewed blues music as popular hits and not folk songs but by only the following year declared blues to be "straight from the folk as surely as the old spirituals" (Miller, 2010, p. 257). The success of the recording also triggered competition in the marketplace between sheet music publishers and the recording companies, the latter of which achieving sales of 100 million units for the first time in 1921.

An early pioneer of field recording, Okeh Records' director Ralph Peer took remote recording equipment to Atlanta, Georgia in 1923 where he recorded regional music outside of the recording studio environment, in bars, hotel rooms, and empty warehouses

where he would 'cut' the record on location. The recordings made by Peer paved the way for other companies such as Columbia, Vocalion, and Victor to begin sending portable recording units south. Paul Oliver (2001) marks the earliest rural blues recordings as Papa Charlie Jackson's *Papa's Lawdy, Lawdy Blues* released in 1924, and Blind Lemon Jefferson's *Long Lonesome Blues* released in 1926, both of which are self-accompanied (Oliver, 2001, p. 731). The commercial success of recordings by rural blues musicians such as Blind Lemon Jefferson and Blind Blake drove a thorough search by record companies for rural blues musicians in the South that continued well into the 1930s. Many musicians were eager to oblige even if this meant performing repertoire in a singular style or recording one-off impromptu songs that were forgotten almost as soon as they were recorded. Despite performing a broad range of styles, sophisticated musicians such as Lonnie Johnson, 'would have done anything to get recorded' and Johnson's entry into a blues contest that took place in St. Louis in 1925 was driven by the lure of an Okeh recording contract promised to the winner, and as Johnson recalled 'it just happened to be a blues contest, so I sang blues' (Wald, 2004, p. 61). Wald suggests the 'bluesman' label was partly invented by recording companies who repeatedly demanded that black musicians performed 'blues' and were dismissive of musicians who entered the studio hoping to record pop ballads, in order to avoid 'embarrassment' (Wald, 2004, pp. 56, 66).

As the quality of recording technology improved with advancements made in both the storage medium and recording time, by 1940 field recordists, including Alan Lomax, were better equipped to capture longer and more accurate blues performances as lightweight and almost unbreakable vinyl records could also be more easily distributed by small record companies to retailers. Needless to say, each recorded take captured by folklorists and record companies was edited and/or discarded at the whim of those who sought the black musicians, with each performer having very little influence in the recording process and receiving next to no remuneration for their effort. As one might imagine folklorists were generally uninterested in recording the latest hits or performances inspired by commercial recordings and instead sought to preserve older traditions that pointed to sources in Britain or Africa. The resultant recordings made by both the commercial record scouts and folklorists then do not fully reflect the repertoires

of southern musicians and therefore blues music was very much demarcated, invented, and defined in the recording process.

Following the introduction of the analogue tape recorder to the US in the 1940s, courtesy of American audio engineer John T. Mullen, recording operations were subsequently revolutionised in the decades that followed as record companies started employing in-house producers and associated staff to perform the bulk of the sound production processes using cutting-edge technology such as multi-track recording which was propelled by the 'Sound on Sound' experiments of jazz guitarist and inventor Les Paul with machines such as the Ampex Model 200, manufactured by the Ampex Data Systems Corporation in 1948. By the 1950s and 1960s, technological mediation of sound in the studio is perceived to have taken on critical significance in the song production process. In the 1950s and at one end of the sound recording aesthetic Sam Phillips, who made early recordings of some notable blues musicians such as Howlin' Wolf and B.B. King based on his conviction that they would appeal to white audiences, pioneered a 'stripped-down' and 'live' approach to production, which influenced emerging blues-inspired musicians such as Keith Richards:

It was the sound that was important. And when I first heard *Heartbreak Hotel*, it wasn't that I suddenly wanted to be Elvis Presley. I had no idea who he was at the time. It was just the sound, the use of a different way of recording. The recording, as I discovered, of that visionary Sam Phillips of Sun Records. The use of echo. No extraneous additions. You felt you were in the room with them, that you were just listening to exactly what went down in the studio, no frills, no nothing, no pastry. That was hugely influential for me (Richards, 2011, p. 80).

This 'direct' and relatively 'raw' recorded aesthetic characterises blues-labelled music recordings to the point that it is arguably just as important to the perceived *sound* of blues as the instrumentation. Additionally, the field recordings of the 1920s and 1930s and subsequent rereleases may operate in this respect to continue to define the association between a perception of a 'rawness' in sound quality, often equated with an 'honest' expression, and authentic blues (marketed) music.

At the other end of the aesthetic spectrum in the 1960s new techniques such as the use of tape loops, pitch and speed manipulation, and new microphone techniques, exemplified in the work of producer Sir George Martin and The Beatles, became the norm as studio experimentation was brought into sharp focus in the song production process to the extent that a 'live' aesthetic derived from musicians performing together in the studio was largely lost. It was not until the end of the 1960s, that pioneering African Americans such as Sly Stone and Jimi Hendrix would obtain overall creative control in recording studios as producers, exemplified in the resultant recordings released in 1968, *Dance To The Music* and *Electric Ladyland* respectively. Both Stone and Hendrix reimaged the blues through constant studio experimentation that allowed surrealist themes in artistic visions to be more completely realised. Gilroy (2010) draws particular attention to the 'transformations' of the blues and Afrofuturism of Hendrix who 'managed to overcome tradition's constraints... electrifying them, blending and bending them into different registers of protest and affirmation' as his 'musical visions demanded sonic and technological changes' (Gilroy, 2010, pp. 131, 145).

In addition to the use of reverberation, delay, tremolo, and flange, Hendrix was also able to generate 3D sound effects through panning and stereo phasing techniques, permitted only through advancements made in multi-track recording and the stereophonic format over the past decade. With directorial control in the studio environment, Hendrix strove for perfection in recording countless takes, often at the frustration of other musicians, reimaging the sound through technological mediation. Experimentation with sound processing in the studio reflected the harnessing of synthesiser-like sound shaping and staggeringly loud overdriven electric guitar tone which permitted the use of previously undesirable amplifier feedback in live performance. On this particular aspect of performance, cultural studies scholar Tobias Van Veen (2016) suggests 'what Hendrix plays is not so much the guitar as the entire soundsystem as it feeds back into itself, a performance of electricity in a technocosmic feedback system' (Van Veen, 2016, p. 76). Such Afrofuturist practice enabled Hendrix to build on the influence of Buddy Guy in pushing and extending the boundaries of blues music further than ever before, and akin to B.B. King and Chuck Berry, develop a large white audience in the process.

In the 1970s blues-marketed music was largely overshadowed by the commercial success of influential white rock acts on both sides of the Atlantic including Led Zeppelin and the Allman Brothers Band, and whilst experienced musicians such as B.B. King and Albert King updated their sound through utilisation of new technologies associated with instrument design and amplification, these musicians were also now perceived as authentic bluesmen by white audiences (Barker & Taylor, 2007, p. 11). The electric Chicago blues sound pioneered by Muddy Waters remained in force in the releases by emerging record labels such as Alligator in the US, Black and Blue in France, and Storyville in Denmark whom effectively promoted and recorded touring blues musicians during this period. Whilst these labels perpetuated this particular sound of blues music as a living tradition, albeit in the commercial shadow of rock, younger African Americans were starting to embrace sounds afforded by new technologies.

By the mid-1970s, synthesisers and programmable drum machines became embedded in popular music styles such as synthpop, disco, and hip-hop. Hip-hop specifically represented a new black youth subculture in predominantly low-income urban areas such as the Bronx in New York City. The hip-hop style was heavily reliant on sampling technologies and portable boom boxes, later referred to negatively as ‘ghetto blasters’, and manufactured by Japanese companies such as Panasonic and Sony. The boom box featured input and output jacks for connection of microphones and turntables, permitting the performance of vocal rapping and record scratching techniques that contributed to defining the hip-hop sound and its increasing popularity in the following decade. Hip-hop DJs drew on such technology to capture sounds in the environment to shape the music for the purposes of dancing and in order to respond to the challenges posed by everyday urban life. DJs could also use live audiences as test-marketers for their hybrid amalgamations as Andre Young, otherwise known as Dr Dre did in the early 1980s. Young considered the responses of nightclub attendees in the evening to refine his material during the day whilst taking advantage of an outdated four-track recording device located in the same club in Compton where he worked. Hip-hop scholar Murray Forman (2002) has suggested that ‘much of recorded rap’s “ideal, imagined construction” in this period bears the implied spatial character or traces of the public night spot or

discotheque, deliberately constructed as primary referents in the music's production processes' and that such 'spatial logic...is known and understood by listeners' (Forman, 2002, p. 82). The centrality of space and place to hip-hop music (see pp. 34-35 and chapter two, p. 146) is enabled through access to relatively affordable forms of technology such as the digital sampler and drum machine that would also reduce the need for musicians in studio environments. The art of digital sampling, in particular, is noted to be 'intricately connected to an African American/African diasporic aesthetic which carefully selects available media, texts, and contexts for performative use' (Bartlett, 2012, p. 565). Indeed, the capabilities and use of the digital sampler illustrates black vernacular technological creativity (p. 156) in the re-deployment, re-conception, and re-creation of musical materials, contesting capitalist notions of public and private property. Although comparatively limited to the range of technology accessible to earlier commercially successful black pioneers such as Sly Stone and Jimi Hendrix, the early proponents of hip-hop were able to reimagine the blues through technology that afforded relative autonomy in recording, editing, and mixing which pointed to future technologies that have come to combine all aspects of the music production process in the digital realm. Avid's Pro Tools and Apple's Logic Pro are such examples that permit a vast range of sound manipulation techniques for a price that provides a large number of people with the capability to produce audio to a professional standard.

As noted previously, experiments with sound continue to occupy blues musicians operating under the blues music market label in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through their use of vintage instruments and amplification but also in the use of pedal board effects which are also derived from the past. Joe Bonamassa, Gary Clark Jr, and Derek Trucks have all made use of the wah-wah pedal and other popular effects such as the tremolo and rotary speaker emulation types, all of which were originally popular in the 1960s. The creative use of sound effects in blues music is well established, Lonnie Johnson is noted to have projected the sound of a guitar performance through a small bathtub of water, as far back as 1917 (Oliver, 1997, p. 84), and a history of tonal manipulation has been documented in the roots of blues music and the precursors to it long before that (Palmer, 1982, p. 30). The implication being that Johnson manipulated sound in order to 'find' a novel way of

performance looking forward, whilst many contemporary blues guitarists, driven by the quest for blues authenticity, are looking to reanimate the sounds of the past in the present, which may then be experienced as new by audiences.

A perceived desire for authentic sounds of the past is manifest in the response of equipment manufacturers who provide digital emulations of vintage equipment and sounds. Companies such as Line 6 (founded in 1996) have built their reputation on emulating guitar and amplifier sounds through digital modelling processes, releasing commercially successful products such as the Line 6 Pod, the Variax and the Spider combo amplifier range. These early products proved popular with young musicians who could, through use of the first version of the Line 6 Pod, for example, possess the tonal characteristics of sixteen different amplifiers without the expense and requirement for space that would come with owning the physical equivalent. Each setting is labelled with reference to either the vacuum tube technology it is designed to emulate, such as *Modern Class A* or the appearance and music style it is associated with, such as *Tweed Blues* and *Brit Blues*. It is quite easy to imagine how the perception of a young musician could be influenced by the association between a music style such as blues and the tonal quality offered by a certain device.

The accuracy of early digital modelling equipment was highly questionable, with very few professional musicians taking much interest as they continued to utilise physical amplifiers when performing in the studio and on stage. However, since the turn of the millennium the quality of digital modelling amplifier systems and software has increased with products such as the Axe-FX Ultra, released in 2007 by Fractal Audio Systems, finding favour with professional musicians such as Joe Satriani, The Edge of U2 and Metallica who found that advancements in digital signal processing coding had improved to the point that the products could even be utilised during live performances. Computer programmer Christoph Kemper also developed a unique amplifier-modelling device in 2013 called the Kemper Profiling Amp. Through the transmission of three test tones sent into the input of the desired amplifier and recorded back into the Kemper device via a microphone, a snapshot of the sonic characteristics of both the amplifier and speaker combination can be reproduced with a high degree of accuracy.

A survey of the artists associated with products by Kemper and Fractal Audio Systems, through the artist pages on the manufacturer websites, reveals a wealth of high profile musicians in the rock and pop world utilising flagship models, but there is a distinct lack of blues-marketed musicians. It is suggested there are two primary reasons for this, both concerned with perceptions of technology and blues music. Firstly, blues-marketed music may be defined by the sounds represented in the Billboard Blues Album chart, and the majority of entries feature audio content that reflects the sonic characteristics of 1960s electric blues. Whilst production values have improved, a relatively narrow and uncomplicated tonal palette is required in order to conform to a blues-marketed music label in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and so there is no perceived requirement for products that would enable a plethora of sound shaping capabilities, only a desire for authentic sounds. Secondly, the quest for authentic sounds is congruent with a scepticism of digital processing and contemporary technology. The blues has a long association with ‘traditional’ equipment, strengthened in the recommendations continually made by equipment enthusiasts in print and online media forms for musicians looking to achieve a sound quality established in the 1960s (Aledort, 2016, p. 79). The point is that in remaining faithful to the sounds of the past and reanimating blues-marketed music from a particular point in time, blues-labelled music is constrained by the musicians who play within the confines of this definition of blues, and such constraint is fuelled by equipment manufacturers who have a financial stake in the longevity of such music styles and so perceptions of blues music can at least be partly shaped by such technological associations.

## **Formats**

When diffused into the environment, recorded sound becomes a perceptible source of information and the formats by which sound is propagated are integral to this process. However, as a mediating step between a live performance that embodies cultural practice and the perception of reproduced sound, and in addition to the recording process itself, the format of recording has potential to shape an understanding of music encountered in

the environment. Ethnomusicologist John Baily (2010) has described the possible impact of emergent sound mediums in societies in which oral traditions, rather than notated traditions, were established. The first area of impact involves the 'standardisation' of an oral tradition that becomes fixed and tangible in the form of a recording and which 'may become a learning resource which codifies a particular performance and thereby tends to standardise it'. Secondly, the opposite process may take place in that the rate of stylistic change may increase due to such exposure to records and as Baily suggests 'there is something about marketing records which generates a need to experience forward movement and innovation'. Thirdly, in the decontextualisation introduced by the sound recording, a performer may experience an elevated social status as someone 'who is no longer at the behest of a live audience'. Finally, 'a new kind of status for the musician may arise' as a recording artist, as particular songs are identified with known musicians and which may lead to an increased interest in a performer's private life (Baily, 2010, p. 111). In this section, all of the areas identified by Baily concerned with the impact of recording formats on societies closely associated with the blues and blues-marketed music are illuminated.

In the 1930s many musicians including Robert Johnson would studiously listen to the latest recordings performed by the likes of Skip James, Tampa Red, Lonnie Johnson, and Son House, noting their running time, learning new musical techniques such as descending bass patterns and walking bass figures, and extend their repertoire of songs in order to keep up-to-date with the latest stylistic developments (Rothenbuhler, 2006, pp. 75-76). The commercially dominant format of recorded song at this time was the recorded disc, originally introduced by the National Gramophone Company in 1897 and by 1910 had outsold the older cylinder format in part due to a comparatively nominal increase in loudness but perhaps, more importantly, was also easier to manufacture, transport and store. In *Big Road Blues*, ethnomusicologist David Evans (1982) proposes a model of folk-blues tradition that encompasses four levels, from the creation of a local repertoire to its dispersion to regional and national expanses. As a caveat Evans stresses that at each level the influence of gramophone records 'crosscuts' the sharing of traditional elements in each locale, tracing the diffusion and influence of the Tommy Johnson recording *Big Road Blues* (1928) of the Drew tradition in recordings made a

great distance away around the same time (Evans, 1982, pp. 262-263). Whilst Evans points out that recordings alone can not be the sole influence in the works under examination, it is also suggested that the influence of records on blues performers may explain why musicians such as Mississippi John Hurt, Furry Lewis and Blind Willie McTell developed styles that were not known to reflect the characteristics heard in the majority of music from their regional bases (Evans, 1982, pp. 256, 311). Therefore, as musicians crafted their own interpretations of tradition by listening to and performing with other musicians in a live performance setting, each musician's style could also be informed by material on gramophone records and so the availability of recordings to listeners was not only important in disseminating the music but also in shaping blues music of the future through its influence on younger blues musicians. Alan Lomax's failed search for Robert Johnson in 1941 led to the discovery and initial recording of Muddy Waters, who after hearing himself back on the recording, was convinced he could become a professional musician but by this time recorded discs were not the only format with which the traditions of the blues were dispersed and reimagined.

Advances in radio technology, stemming from its origin in the work of Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi from 1894 and subsequent initial radio broadcast programs in the 1920s in Detroit, Michigan are exemplified in the developments in the broadcast distance made in this period (Hong, 2001, p. 25). Influential radio stations such as KFFA and WROX primarily covered the upper Delta region through such increases, with KFFA's initial reach of 35-40 miles doubling to 80 miles in 1944. The longest running daily American broadcast *King Biscuit Time* made its debut in 1941 on KFFA and featured African-American blues musicians Rice Miller, later known as Sonny Boy Williamson II, and Robert Lockwood performing live in the 30-minute radio show. Initially broadcast from 12 noon and later from 12.15pm, *King Biscuit Time* was named after a local brand of flour (King Biscuit Flour) in Helena, Arkansas after its distributor (the Interstate Grocer Company) had agreed to finance the show, after a request from Miller, in exchange for endorsements and advertising on the radio. This arrangement set a precedent for other distributors to advertise products on the radio after the sales of King Biscuit flour skyrocketed following the initial broadcasts on *King Biscuit Time*. Little

Walter had his own radio show on KFFA in 1945 advertising Mother's Best flour, and Muddy Waters early morning slot at 6am was sponsored by Katz Clothing Store. B.B. King also later advertised Pepticon tonic on WDIA radio, a station which would be the first in the US to feature exclusively black programming in 1949 (Palmer, 1982, p. 219).

It is unsurprising then that the radio format became an integral means of expression within black communities from the late 1940s and into the 1950s, illustrating how the format can be considered 'deeply entangled with the inner lives and political agency of its users' (Bessire & Fisher, 2012, p. 4). The all-black programming of WDIA in Memphis also proved highly influential to future performers such as Elvis Presley and other radio programmers across the US, but racial barriers were so severe that black musicians were rarely seen in Memphis and therefore interracial collaboration amongst blues musicians in this area was virtually impossible. By the mid-1950s the distribution of popular music had become increasingly globalised through the availability of records and the radio format and as Wald (2010) points out with reference to the emergent rock 'n' roll generation, 'blues was reaching a wider audience than ever before-but most people were no longer calling it blues' (Wald, 2010, p. 64). Subsequently, as technology enabled a broader distribution of blues music, the culture from within which the music was nurtured and evolved remained subjugated and increasingly detached from the commercial aspects of the music style, a style which in the recording industry was changing through developments in performance and recording technologies. It would not be until the Civil Rights period through programmes such as *Radio Free Dixie* presented by activist Robert F. Williams and broadcast across the US from Cuba (where Williams had been exiled in 1961), that the radio platform could be utilised to speak out about injustices in the US, in part through music that was deemed inappropriate to broadcast in America at the time, including protest songs by Nina Simone such as *Mississippi Goddam* and *Four Women* (Neal, 2014, pp. 137-138). The influence of the radio format in such intersections with social relations 'routinely intensifies and elicits novel forms of imagination, meaning, and desire that exceed its informational content' (Bessire & Fisher, 2012, p. 4), and the examples above illustrate some of the radio format's tensions and cultural resonances.

The launch of the compact disc in Europe and North America in 1983 signalled the start of a new period in music consumption, with the digital format offering technological advancements over older formats such as the vinyl record and the popular audio cassette, such as an increased playing time and random access functionality. When compared to vinyl records, the CD was also relatively small making it ideal for collectors who had battled with the shortcomings of the compact cassette tape such as audio hiss, and the mechanical problems of cassette players that would render tapes unusable. As music technology scholar Mark Katz (2010) states in his assessment of the impact of the gramophone and recordings of that time, portability enables potentially every US citizen to ‘hear the classics’ as ‘recordings could travel where professional musicians never ventured’ making the ‘once unimaginable, commonplace’ (Katz, 2010, pp. 59, 21). The portability of the CD compared to the vinyl record meant that recordings could in fact travel intact a much greater distance and therefore, reach collectors and music revivalists around the globe and consequently impact on revivalist practices (such as those discussed in chapter eight) in the ways in which Baily (2010) has suggested. Additionally, Sony released a portable version of the compact disc player in 1986 called the Discman replacing the successful tape-based Walkman that had emerged in 1979, and by the 1990s compact discs could be played in DVD players and on laptop computers. By 1988 the sales of CDs were higher than vinyl records, and four years later exceeded those of pre-recorded cassettes in the US (Straw, 2009, p. 83).

The popularity of the CD format coincided with a renewed interest in blues music partially as a result of the commercial success of recordings by Stevie Ray Vaughan, Robert Cray, and John Lee Hooker which in addition to Vaughan’s memorable live performances had brought blues music back into the spotlight and raised its profile amongst younger listeners. Once record companies became aware that consumers were willing to repurchase the titles in their vinyl and/or cassette collections in the new digital format, record companies reissued an almost endless number of blues recordings, including catalogues by the Chess label and long out-of-print titles, to the point that it became easier to obtain ‘vintage’ blues titles in the 1990s than it was at the time of their initial release. The release of Robert Johnson’s *The Complete Recordings* in 1990 by

Columbia is a two-CD set of 29 recordings and almost half as many alternate takes, that reached number 80 on the Billboard 200 selling over a million copies by 1994. These recordings, originally captured between 1936 and 1937, were presented as the creative influence and roots of seminal blues musicians such as Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. In the new listening format, consumers could conveniently access music which had long been glorified by folklorists through the associated mythology expressed in novels and films, as in the 1986 film *Crossroads* by John Fusco for example. Will Straw (2009) states that the transition of Johnson's recordings from the 78rpm format to 1960s vinyl and to the compact disc deepened Johnson's canonical importance and widened his audience at each stage (Straw, 2009, p. 84), and it is clear that whilst the developments in listening formats up to this point provided the medium for blues to re-emerge in a commercial sense, in reanimating products from the 1930s the actions of record companies in this period essentially reflects the work of the folk revivalists of the 1950s and 1960s in constraining the blues to an earlier form which brings with it and sustains the same connotations of a perceived authenticity.

By 1980, the concept of music video entertainment was nothing new, the Beatles had utilised music videos to promote their songs from the 1960s, and American television programmes such as *Shindig!*, broadcast on CBS from 1964, also combined popular music performances and visual elements. However, the launch of John Lack's MTV in 1981 as a dedicated music video television channel enabled musicians to add a new level of expression to their music in the form of a short accompanying film clip. Image proved to be a contentious issue as the channel predominately featured videos by white musicians, presumably to target the young white male demographic closely associated with rock music at the time. Combined pressure from record label executives such as CBS Records president Walter Yetnikoff, and black music artists themselves such as Rick James, eventually led to an increase in the number of black music videos on MTV, which in turn prompted record companies to start financing a greater number of music video productions. Michael Jackson's 13-minute *Thriller* video, aired in 1983, was a landmark in music video broadcasting in this respect, its success essentially opening the

doors for musicians from culturally diverse backgrounds to make an impact through MTV transmission (Soundbreaking, 2016).

The renewed commercial popularity of blues-marketed music in the 1980s and 1990s was only partially reflected on MTV in shows such as *Unplugged* that in its first series provided the platform for a live acoustic performance from Stevie Ray Vaughan in 1989, and in 1992 broadcast a hugely successful unplugged performance from Eric Clapton evident in the breaking of commercial sales records in a number of countries and earning numerous Grammy awards for the associated recording. Whilst ‘unplugged’ may have been an ideal opportunity for blues-marketed musicians to increase their appeal through acoustic live performances very few appear to have been given the opportunity, only primarily white blues-influenced acts such as the Allman Brothers, Bob Dylan, and Page and Plant made an appearance on the show. Although the hip-hop act De La Soul appeared during this period, the show predominately featured pop musicians such as Paul McCartney, Elton John, and Mariah Carey and popular alternative rock acts such as Nirvana, Alice in Chains, and Pearl Jam. Whilst it could be argued that each and every one of these acts has performed a reimagining of blues music throughout or at various stages of their careers, the lack of blues-labelled music broadcast on MTV at the time indicates commercial blues was not deemed popular enough to warrant airplay. Additionally and in conjunction, the idea of music video fabrication does not sit in accordance with notions of authenticity applied to the life and recordings of Robert Johnson and his contemporaries around this time, notions only sustained further by Clapton’s aforementioned stripped-down performance of primarily blues standards of the past.

The Moving Picture Experts Group audio format (MPEG-I, widely known as mp3) released in 1993, had been developed by German electrical engineer and mathematician Karlheinz Brandenburg as part of the Fraunhofer Society from the late 1980s and was the result of experimentation with audio data compression techniques. The mp3 format, identified in its filename extension established in 1995 as ‘.mp3’, is based on the auditory principle of perceptual coding that exploits the limitations of frequency response in human hearing to enable a reduction in the overall file size, whilst retaining the majority of the useful audio content. The development of the mp3 player afforded listeners an

even greater abundance of material on a single device, whilst retaining the random access appeal that the CD platform offered when it replaced the audio cassette tape as the most popular listening format previously. Although the format can introduce unwanted audible artefacts in the lossy coding process, including echo, noise, and a reduction in bass content, the mp3 has now become one of the primary formats for music consumption transmitted in digital downloads and online streaming facilities (Witt, 2015, pp. 10-12, 91). With the release of Apple's iTunes media player and listening devices such as the iPod in 2001, the mp3 format grew in popularity and by 2012 downloaded music represented over half of all music sales in the US (IFPI, 2016a). Other online music stores such as Amazon MP3 and Google Play emerged from the mid-2000s onwards and in common with most music distributors, blues record labels such as Alligator started offering free mp3 downloads as album samplers through their websites to encourage physical album sales.

Advances made in Internet bandwidth have also enabled a rise in the popularity of audio streaming services for music consumption. The Swedish company Spotify launched their platform in 2008 and seven years later Apple aimed to offer serious competition in the marketplace with the release of Apple Music. Streaming services allow users to stream high-quality audio without the requirement to download mp3 files. Many online streaming companies offer easy access to large catalogues of music in exchange for a subscription fee, and the popularity of the streaming format has led to a decrease in both digital download sales and physical sales. The streaming format has proven to be quite controversial due to the way in which payments are calculated for recording artists, as a copyright owner of a single song or album does not receive a percentage of each sale as in the case of a downloaded mp3 file for instance, and instead streaming payments are made based on the number of streams compared to the total number of songs in the catalogue, resulting in fractional payments of a US cent for each individual play. When compared to the broadcast of a song in the traditional radio format, the streamed online radio format only appears to be lucrative for the most popular of recording artists such as Taylor Swift, who herself has had disputes with both Spotify and Apple Music over royalty payments (Adejobi, 2016).

The controversy associated with the streaming format follows similar furore over file sharing and ongoing battles with copyright infringement, most famously in cases associated with peer-to-peer sharing networks which allow users to essentially download music for free through sites such as Napster, released in 1999 and Kazaa Media Desktop, launched in 2006. The popularity of multimedia formats such as the video-hosting site YouTube (founded in 2005), has also led to the illegal uploading of a seemingly unlimited number of music albums that are consumed for free by users. Whilst the increasing availability of music in streaming and downloadable formats may, in theory, enable users to find previously unheard music more easily, the categorisation of music on such platforms complicates consumer listening habits as music vendors seek to control what listeners hear in order to supply them with more of the same. In essence, it is likely that a listener may only discover the music of Leroy Carr or Memphis Minnie for example, if they have an idea of what they are seeking in the first instance, irrespective of the large number of recordings such musicians produced from the late 1920s onwards.

Since 2007, there has been a noticeable increase in the sales of the physical vinyl format from around one million albums in the said year to over six million by 2013. Although attractive to nostalgic collectors, the vinyl format has also proven popular with younger consumers who are captivated by notions of authenticity manifest in vintage materials perceived to exist outside of mainstream culture, and perhaps most recently notable in the hipster trend. In addition to the consumption of indie and alternative music in a vinyl record format, the contemporary hipster trend may be distinguished by the use of skinny jeans, cutting-edge hairstyles, big glasses, vintage clothes, barista coffee, and beanie hats. With reference to both the trend's global and local identity markers, digital ethnography scholars Ico Maly and Piia Varis (2015) suggest the hipster culture is 'best understood as a layered translocal and polycentric phenomenon that rests on a complex network of infrastructures' (Maly & Varis, 2015, p. 8). The interaction between the local and the global is highlighted in the example of the Peruvian hipster scene in which local, middle-class Peruvian youth, who had previously dismissed folkloric cumbia music, suddenly celebrated and popularised the music by dancing to it, following the release of a compilation titled *Roots of Chicha: Psychedelic Cumbias from Peru* in 2007 by a French-

run Brooklyn record label Barbés. In this process, local cultural phenomena is recontextualised and globalised and therefore made ‘cool’. A key aspect of the hipster culture embedded in this example is ‘the claim to authenticity, uniqueness and individuality’ (Maly & Varis, 2015, p. 8). The aim to distinguish one’s self from the cultural mainstream also distinguished what US novelist Norman Mailer described as ‘The White Negro’ in 1957 to describe the hipster generation of the 1940s, tied to the emergent bebop style and who dismissed swing music and its mainstream associations. Amiri Baraka (1995) suggested that the white beboppers of this period ‘were as removed from the society as Negroes, but *as a matter of choice*’ (Baraka, 1995, p. 188, italics my own). This hip subculture, from which the contemporary hipster trend is derived and which shares some parallels, was distinguished by its nonconformity to, or in the case of many black Americans at the time, exclusion from, many aspects of the cultural mainstream. In this period, white hipsters in the US appropriated African-American culture due to an imagined function of ‘African Americans as a symbol of social conscience, sexual freedom, and resistance to the dominant order’ (Monson, 1995, p. 398). Whilst this white captivation with urban African-American music, dress, and speech largely characterises the hipster generation of the 1940s, it is not perceived to be so explicitly present in the hipster trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, and as I have demonstrated in chapters two and three, the development of blues-marketed music has largely been characterised by a fascination with African-American culture and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, blues-rock musicians such as Jack White continue to exemplify such (for example, see chapter five, pp. 191-196).

In 2013, White collaborated with Revenant Records to reissue their entire back catalogue of blues and roots music on 180-gram vinyl LP, released in two volumes titled *The Rise and Fall of Paramount Records 1917-1932, Volume 1* (2013) and *The Rise and Fall of Paramount Records 1928-1932, Volume 2* (2014). White, who had by this time accomplished himself as a successful and high profile musician through the commercial success achieved in The White Stripes, actively promoted both the vinyl format and the blues acts such as Charley Patton and Blind Willie McTell who appear in the catalogue, through the medium of the Internet. White has also released what became the top-selling

vinyl album in the US in 2014 with his second solo album *Lazaretto* (2014). Since then, many blues-orientated acts including Eric Clapton, Keb' Mo', Sonny Boy Williamson, and Junior Wells have had their music released or rereleased as both digital downloads and in the physical format of vinyl.

## **Distribution**

The development of the Internet since the 1960s in the United States for international information exchange purposes led to a configuration of the global communication network by the mid-1990s that resembled those of subsequent decades. The establishment of the Internet during this time coincided with the commercial blues revival and Internet users could not only research what had been written on blues music with a few clicks of a computer mouse but could also order large amounts of music online. In 1994 the music vendor CD Now billed itself as the 'Internet Music Store' with the slogan 'Music for the Masses', providing a catalogue of over 140,000 compact discs, cassettes and mini-discs with ratings, reviews, and biographies. In this sense, the growth of information and communication technologies like the Internet permitted the formation of online communities that enabled individuals to engage with subcultures in which they may not have been previously able to do so, prolonging the life cycle of subcultures through online communication and e-commerce.

The technological medium through which music is distributed has long permitted the sustenance and shaping of cultural identity. The popularity of blues recordings in the 1920s can be attributed in part to innovative mail-order services developed by recording companies such as Paramount, and the placing of record advertisements in northern black newspapers such as *The Chicago Defender*. By 1927, 500 race records, not including those marketed as jazz, were released each year (Davis, 2005, p. 62), and blues music was not only performed across southern states but within cities such as Chicago and St. Louis that had large populations with rural origins (Palmer, 1982, p. 109). Whilst commercially distributed recordings influenced the perpetuity of blues music through the

popularity of the records made with consumers, and thus shaping record companies objectives in the type of music to be recorded, folklorists in the 1930s and 1940s such as Alan Lomax would also be inspired to record blues musicians after discovering their music through the medium of the recorded disc and discover new blues musicians on their travels often by chance. The importance of listening format and music distribution to cultural identity can be seen in the approach to fieldwork taken by Lomax:

I am not exaggerating when I say that this neon-lit, chrome-plated musical monster was for the people of the Delta not only their chief source of new songs but also an important symbol of democracy, one way for them to assert their racial solidarity.... Thus a good way to size up the ethnic composition of an area was to look at the selections on neighbourhood machines (Lomax, 1994, p. 38).

The mechanical phonograph referred to here played a role in reflecting and shaping societal attitudes through the record selections made on the device by local patrons, who subsequently determined which recordings would remain on the player and which were removed. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of what were primary localised sources of music consumption is weakened, or at least increasingly complicated by the expansion of Internet networks and associated usage as the dynamics of localised culture ‘responds’ to global cultures encountered through contemporary forms of technology. The effects of globalisation concerned with technology can be seen in the closure and replacement of many traditional radio stations as Internet-based radio has grown in popularity in accordance with improvements made in the quality of digital broadcasting and the ubiquity of portable listening devices.

Online media has also raised the awareness of cultural artefacts through communication of both authorised and unauthorised filmed live performances and studio recordings on video-hosting sites, the content of which can also be shared globally within seconds on social media platforms such as Twitter (founded in 2006) and Facebook (launched in 2004). In addition to artist websites and forums, social media sites additionally offer a convenient way in which musicians can interact with listeners and other professional musicians, sharing opinion and promoting their music.

The communication network that encompasses and permits such interactions is continually expanding and evolving as advancements in mobile phone technology, such as the introduction of the smartphone by the Japanese firm NTT DoCoMo in 1999, have grown to incorporate not only photographic and video recording capabilities but a personal computing capacity that permits web access, through a small portable device. Companies such as BlackBerry and Apple released models in the US a few years after that proved so popular that by the mid-2000s had gained mass adoption in the country. The smartphone also offers Internet access at a relatively small cost to those populations in developing countries who could not afford desktop computers. The development of 'app' (application) stores such as Google Play and Apple's App Store, both launched in 2008, allowed users to install additional programs on to their computing devices, including blues-specific radio services, guitar tuition, performance backing tracks, and touristic discovery trail types. It should be clear from this that blues-marketed music like all other cultural artefacts, is distributed through globalised flows within the recording industry that has continually responded to, embraced, and capitalised on new forms of technology as they emerged from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

The centrality of technology and associated usage in the development of blues music culture is clearly evident at each stage of the song production process, from the initial stage of mediation to the technological forms that enable consumers to hear recorded artefacts. By placing such developments in their historical context, a platform with which to review contemporary forms of blues music culture can be established enabling revivalist and other music industry practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be assessed with greater clarity. This chapter has revealed how popular conceptions of blues music have been shaped within and constrained by mass-market practices imbued with the ideological beliefs of music industry professionals and folklorists who, through technological means, omitted aspects of culture that at least in part constituted the day-to-day lives of black musicians in the US from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Contrarily, this work illustrates how technology is a key force in how empowered musicians have reimagined the blues, responding to environmental change in recordings that were and continue to be met with resistance from those seeking to preserve older traditions of the past. The work

demonstrates the degree to which technology has impacted on blues music culture, the ways in which blues-marketed music has and continues to influence technological development, and finally how time, technology, and notions of authenticity are related.



## **Chapter 5: De Stijl & Blues Authenticity**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine listener perception of authenticity and performer experience in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century blues-based recording. In addressing both Alan Moore's (2002) call for a shift in scholarly focus from the composer or originator to the listener, and academic stance on the usefulness of the authenticity term through adoption of his tripartite framework (see pp. 53-54), there is demonstration of how and why notions of authenticity may be perceived to be embedded within each stage of the music production process and illustrate how such may impact on the creative decision-making of popular music artists.

In the context of this study, first-person authenticity will be examined using published artist interviews in print and online media formats as a source for gauging whether it was felt the recorded performance had integrity. Whilst it is important to remember such interviews are mediated and that the reliability of secondary sources is always subject to question, in this context such mediated and potentially calculated discourse is deemed a fair reflection of both how and what popular music consumers perceive musicians and their artefacts to be. Additionally, instrumentation, performative approach, and recording technique will also fall within the study of authentic expression. Second-person authenticity for the album recording will primarily draw upon critical responses provided in professional music reviews, online fan reviews and feedback, and unit sales. Artist interviews will also provide information on how the act feels they are successfully delivering blues music in the context of perceived traditions and its history and this will contribute to an elucidation of the authenticity of execution within the recording.

The recording to be examined is *De Stijl* by The White Stripes. It is the second album by the duo of Jack White (born John Anthony Gillis) and Meg White and was released prior to the recordings *White Blood Cells* (2001) and *Elephant* (2003) that both achieved

mainstream success in the UK and the US. This specific album has been selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, the album was released in the year 2000 and so in support of claims raised throughout the thesis with regards to listener perceptions of authenticity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is deemed important to select material that spans the entire century and not simply material that is collectively released in one year such as 2017 for instance, and so *De Stijl* marks the beginning of this time bracket. Secondly, there is an abundance of empirical data readily available for synthesis including interview data, professional album reviews, online consumer comments, song transcriptions in music magazine publications and quantitative data in the form of sales figures. Since the group broke up in 2011, insightful reflections on navigating blues authenticity have arisen in interviews provided to the press and it is suggested such open reflections would not be as freely made by active performers who still navigate notions of authenticity related to the past in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as Steven Wold aka Seasick Steve. The album was also recorded by a group who, as will be made clear, have since been revered by the media at various stages in their career for contributions to blues music and its renewed or increasing popularity. Thirdly, and as will be seen, the approach to traditions of the past in recordings and live performances polarised revered blues performers, and the contention surrounding such an approach to blues performance has a history in itself. Fourthly, the group experienced huge commercial success with young audiences at the time and so listener perception of the ‘authentic’ approach taken by the group is also of interest. It is also perhaps unsurprising that both the group and main focal point Jack White have been subject to the attention of popular music authors (Hasted, 2016; True, 2010) and received scholarly attention in studies of popular culture (Mack, 2015; Johnson, 2014). Finally, and as with the majority, if not all of the songs referenced in this thesis, there is no conscious emotional attachment with the album in that it was encountered during the course of the research and unlike many of the younger listeners who left online album reviews, has had no influence on me in my formative years. Further information regarding the group and the album recording is provided and contextualised further throughout this chapter.

## Authenticity of Expression

In transcripts of media interviews given by Jack White, it quickly becomes apparent the approach White wishes to convey in the music production process. Emphasis is placed on an honest musical expression that reflects the perceived approach taken by the blues musicians he cites which includes Son House, Charley Patton, and Robert Johnson:

If people really love music, they're going to start being drawn toward honesty, and if they're drawn to that, it's a direct line right back to Charley Patton and Son House. I'm very skeptical of musicians who say they love music and don't love the blues (White cited in Phipps, 2003).

Whilst White acknowledges the influence such musicians have had on his music, he exhibits a consciousness of the social-historical conditions that gave rise to the blues in altering the lyrical focus in accordance with his own sociocultural background suggesting that he would 'feel really fake sitting down, adopting a black accent, and singing about trains or something' (Phipps, 2003). As shown in chapter three (pp. 148-149), global studies in subsequent African-American forms such as hip-hop (Kahf, 2012; Santos, 2016; Rollefson, 2017) have also demonstrated how music may be localised to the meet the needs of local communities around the world, and such processes can be traced as far back as the colonial period in US history (see, p. 139). In this instance, White's involvement with the blues tradition is instead channelled through a reimagining of blues expression that focuses on childhood as, in White's words, 'that honesty seems to reflect the same nature that the blues was reflecting' (Phipps, 2003). To this white man who grew up in Detroit, Michigan it would appear that the critical factor in defining blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a truthful, honest expression. However, since the group achieved mainstream success numerous revelations have brought such notions of honesty into question. The duo's brother-and-sister relationship was proven to be false after marriage and divorce certificates were published exposing the fact Jack had taken Megan's surname of White in wedlock instead of using his own surname of Gillis (Fricke, 2005). More recently, White reflected that 'nothing that is said in an interview

or onstage into a microphone - just like nothing in the Bible - should be taken literally' (Mulvey, 2012), and so one may wonder how far White's act is calculated, beyond the use of red, white, and yellow imagery and mythical autobiographical backstories. However, the blues tradition has a long association with mythology as exemplified in the biographies of one of White's main influences Robert Johnson. White has stated that he discovered Robert Johnson through Led Zeppelin's version of *Travelling Riverside Blues* and Cream's *Crossroads* but says he 'didn't fall in love with the original versions until I was 18 or 19' (Tolinski, 2006, p. 57). The commercial success of blues albums at this time in the 1990s, including the release of Johnson's *The Complete Recordings* album in 1990, can be seen to coincide with White's then new-found appreciation of Johnson and other blues-marketed musicians and artefacts rereleased in a new format as part of the blues music revival. Therefore, it is logical to presume the influence on White's music stems from this period and had a profound effect, as he openly proposes, with the associated mythology included. White has also acknowledged the use of gimmicks in his reimagining of the blues tradition, referencing the stage antics of Jimi Hendrix, Charley Patton, and Tommy Johnson, seemingly to justify his own approach to the incorporation of visual elements during live performances on stage and suggested that 'with The White Stripes, I wanted to have a new blues...but I'm trying to present it in a way that shakes it up for me and the listener' (Mulvey, 2012).

## **Instrumentation**

My original idea for the White Stripes was to break everything down to the essentials. The band is made up of real simple components: three musical elements - vocals, guitars, and drums; and three graphic elements - the colors red, black, and white. The whole framework became a great excuse for doing what I really wanted to do, which was to simply play blues, or blues-based music (White cited in Tolinski, 2006, p. 55).

Although instruments such as the piano and banjo have been used to accompany blues singers frequently in the past, it is commonly acknowledged that the two instruments most closely associated with blues music are the guitar and harmonica. Compared to the relatively expensive and immobile pianos of the time, guitars could be obtained for as little as \$4.00 in an 1894 Sears, Roebuck and Company mail-order catalogue and as with the harmonica, were very portable. These factors made the instruments very accessible and appealing to itinerant blues musicians, who found they could express themselves largely irrespective of their economic status, geographic location, and educational background. As noted in chapter four (pp. 165-166, 172), parallels can also be drawn here with the centrality of affordable and portable forms of technology to the development of more recent music styles such as hip-hop (Forman, 2012, pp. 527-529), illustrating, in at least one sense, how deeply embedded the traditions of the past are in the present.

On *De Stijl* the primary elements White refers to such as vocals, guitar, and drums are heard throughout, and augmented only by a short harmonica solo on the track *Hello Operator*, piano on *Apple Blossom* and *Truth Doesn't Make a Noise*, a double bass and violin on *I'm Bound to Pack It Up* and an electric violin part on *Why Can't You Be Nicer to Me?* White incorporates slide guitar on the majority of tracks, a technique he attributes to Son House (whose track *Death Letter Blues* is also covered on the album) stating 'everything changed after I heard Son House. I threw away what little I knew about playing guitar and started working on a deeper thing. I started playing slide' (Tolinski, 2006, p. 60). Through use of the word 'deeper' White acknowledges this performative aspect of blues tradition and the reverence with which it is held, but in doing so also reduces blues music performance to the profile of the stereotypical country bluesman playing slide guitar, when countless blues performers since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including those located in rural regions, have performed without a bottleneck. In addition to his 1964 J.B. Hutto Montgomery Ward Airline guitar, White has also opted over the course of his career to use instruments by manufacturers that have previously been associated with blues musicians. White has utilised a 1950s Kay hollow-body, a brand used most visibly by Howlin' Wolf, and a 1915 Gibson L-1 acoustic guitar commonly referred to as the Robert Johnson model. In the opening scenes to the film documentary *It Might Get*

*Loud* (2009) directed by Davis Guggenheim, White is also seen building a homemade stringed instrument not unlike the homemade ‘diddley bow’ found in Mississippi, an instrument closely associated with the development of blues music (Davis, 2005, pp. 31-32) and noted to have been used by Robert Johnson as a child (Wald, 2004, p. 107). The simplistic approach to instrumentation on *De Stijl* primarily reflects the simple vocal and instrumental accompaniment combination of the country blues musicians White commonly cites (albeit with additional drum parts), whilst also reflecting some broader folk-music influence on a small number of tracks.

## Performance

The childlike drum parts contributed by Meg White have been both criticised and praised as playing a key role in the sound of the group. Whilst her drumming skills are noted to be technically underdeveloped, the responsive nature of her performances afforded a fluid approach to performance that allowed Jack White to dictate impromptu changes in tempo or form at will. Such impromptu changes can be linked to improvisation as a quality of blackness (for example, see chapter two, p. 111 and chapter four, p. 156) and are reflective of those changes found within the performances of blues musicians such as Son House and Blind Lemon Jefferson. The Son House cover *Death Letter* from *De Stijl* showcases this approach as the twelve-bar form is occasionally shortened to eleven bars and several stanzas are omitted. Sudden tempo changes and extended guitar solos are also exemplified in live performances of the song which have ranged from three minutes to nine minutes in length and White has even gone to the extent of begging Meg not to practice to ensure that the ‘naïve quality’ in her playing was retained, as to not detract from the fluid style in performance (Tolinski, 2006, p. 116).

White adopts a varied vocal approach on the album as *Hello Operator* includes distorted semi-shouted vocals, *Little Bird* features a lower more understated vocal with occasional hollers heralding instrumental passages, and *Apple Blossom* and *I’m Bound to Pack It Up* exhibit White using some of the higher notes within his tenor range (reaching A4 in both

tracks) with subtle vibrato and melismata. Generally speaking, White's vocal approach is somewhat ragged with regards to pitch and timbre and in an article titled *The 100 Greatest Singers* compiled by The Blues Magazine (Yates, 2016, p. 43), has even been described as 'screaming like a banshee that's hit its thumb with a hammer, in a holler pitched between primal blues and spittle-flecked punk'. In some ways this ragged, imperfect vocal approach mimics the honesty found in the storytelling of early country blues musicians and compliments both the simplistic drum parts, repeated guitar riffs, and impromptu changes in tempo and form, culminating to create imprecise and perceivably unmediated performances which according to White, appeal to his aesthetic taste (for a further contemporary example of this vocal approach, see the analysis of *Cleveland* in chapter seven, p. 221).

When asked about technically accomplished blues musicians such as Stevie Ray Vaughan, White remarks that 'somehow it is more meaningful to me when I hear him (Son House) miss a note and hit the neck of his guitar with his slide' (Tolinski, 2006, p. 60). In assuming this position both musically and in conversation, White shows an awareness of the notions of authenticity that surround blues music tradition and the 'he plays too many notes' argument often directed primarily at white blues guitarists in defence of perceivably older and more traditional approaches to blues music performance. In a separate interview, he engages with the rhetoric of authenticity that grew in prominence from the late 1950s concerned with instrumentation, dismissing electric blues from the 1970s onwards as a 'waste of time' (Phipps, 2003). Whilst such remarks appear to be consistent with White's perception of performers such as Stevie Ray Vaughan, it seems to contradict his own approach to music when considering the primarily electrified music found on *De Stijl* and indeed The White Stripes recorded output in general. The paradoxical effect is further emphasised in White's approach to the fourth album *Elephant* which contains numerous guitar solos and was released in the same year as the aforementioned interview was published.

White's romantic view of the blues, as pervaded in interviews given to the music press is a reflection of the blues ideology manifest in the actions of the likes of Alan Lomax, John Hammond, James McKune, and Samuel Charters, and as such could be viewed as both a

product of and contribution to blues revivalism (see chapter two, pp. 116-122 and chapter three, pp. 146-147). However, White's creative output is constrained by such ideology to the extent that on *White Blood Cells* released only one year later than *De Stijl*, he attempts to avoid blues altogether suggesting that 'there's no blues on the new record. We're taking a break from that. There's no slide work, bass, guitar solos, or cover songs. It's just me and Meg, guitar, drums, and piano' (Maerz, 2001). In addition to stylistic perceptions of blues authenticity, White's attempt to distract from the blues label is also motivated by perceptions concerned with race and origin:

We keep getting put with this bringing-back-the-blues kind of statement as a label for the band, and I just wanted to break away from that because it's really hard to do that, being...where we're from, even though that's the music that we really love and that I'm really inspired by (White cited in Giannini, 2001).

White's rather idiosyncratic approach to the expression of music style and relationship with the blues over the course of his career illustrates how contemporary musicians may engage with and reimagine certain traditions of the past, whilst avoiding others (see level of selective tradition, pp. 62-63). There is a perception that a key distinction between black musicians such as Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker, and white performers such as Eric Clapton in the 1960s was that black blues artists were content to perform solely in the blues idiom whilst white acts were largely non-committal to the blues (Allen, 2006, p. 154). Whilst such a view depends on how tightly and in what ways a listener wishes to define blues music, White's dual contemporary reimagining of the blues and evasion of the blues-marketed label appears to fall within such a distinction. White's perceptions of blues authenticity and links to the traditions of the past will be explored further at a later point in this chapter.

## Recording Techniques

In addition to the use of vintage instruments, White has also shown a preference for analogue recording technology and processes:

Analogue is the medium of all the kinds of music that I am really fond of...the actual sound of analogue is 10 times better than that of digital. I think the reason why many people say they don't like the way things sound on the radio or the television nowadays is because it's all recorded digitally (White cited in Tingen, 2014).

*De Stijl* was recorded on an eight-track analogue tape recorder and the motivation for using this equipment stems from White's love of blues songs from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that were often recorded on the fly on to gramophone discs at 78rpm by representatives from record companies such as Paramount. As stated in the previous chapter (p. 183), White has since released 1600 Paramount recordings as box set collections in a vinyl format through his own label Third Man Records. These early field recordings and the impromptu nature of the performances may have also inspired White to record *De Stijl* in his living room. In White's opinion, the relative ease of digital recording with software such as Pro Tools, when compared to the more arduous analogue methods 'leads to over thinking, which kills any spontaneity and the humanity of the performance' (Tolinski, 2006, p. 57). In other words, White links digital technology with artificial overproduced recordings, and reckons analogue methods to the honest quality of performances by country blues musicians, the latter a clear artistic goal for White on the self-produced *De Stijl*.

White is also known to prefer tube equipment over solid-state amplification and split his vocal signal into two paths, one sent directly to the recording console, the other plugged into a vintage tube guitar amplifier for extra warmth and distortion (for digital emulations of vintage equipment, see chapter four, p. 173). This technique was often used by blues and jazz musicians who would utilise both instrument and microphone inputs on early

amplifiers such as the Gibson GA-75 in the 1940s and 1950s (Marx, 2009). Modern versions of this design have been informally labelled as busker amplifiers as the number of possible inputs in the portable device has made them popular with street performers. The simplistic, do-it-yourself approach to recording combined with use of retro analogue equipment and technique linked to the traditions of the past has earned White praise from the public, music media, and fellow blues musicians such as Jimmy Page who uses the term ‘refreshing’ in discourse on The White Stripes (Tolinski, 2006, p. 55). Response to *De Stijl* as part of Moore’s ‘second-person authenticity’ type will now be examined.

### **Authenticity of Experience**

In a positive review of the album for Rolling Stone magazine, Jenny Eliscu (2000) points to a ‘feel of improvisation’ and ‘minimal’ drumming in suggesting that ‘you don’t need bombast to make a blues explosion’. Through the use of the word ‘bombast’ reference is made to the showmanship and extended guitar solos that typify the music of contemporary electric blues-marketed acts such as Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Jonny Lang. In doing so, Eliscu also alludes to the way in which blues music has historically been defined very narrowly, and makes reference to multiple genres when assessing the album including ‘minimum R&B’, rock and roll, and blues. When looking at other professional and user reviews of the album, it would seem that listeners have varying perceptions of what style of music is heard, and this is further complicated by White’s seemingly varied approach to musical expression on *De Stijl*. In an AllMusic review, Heather Phares (2000) uses the word ‘diversity’ when describing the elements of the album, pointing to bubblegum pop, cabaret, blues, and classic rock as stylistic sources whilst praising the hybrid combinations of such and awarding four-and-a-half stars out of a possible five. Stevie Chick (2005) of the NME also praises the hybridity exhibited in the album awarding a score of eight out of ten, stating ‘The White Stripes satisfy much deeper than their gimmick might suggest...expertly flirting with Beck-flavoured hick-hop (*Hello Operator*), Zep-flavoured swagger-blues (*Little Bird*) and the odd melancholic ballad (*Apple Blossom*)’. Whilst the almost exclusive use of the country-rap label synonym ‘hick-hop’ can be found in this review, there is also reference to Led Zeppelin,

who are the most frequently referenced band in discussions of the music on the album. William Bowers (2002) refers to ‘the Stripes’ Zep-a-billy’ in his positive review for Pitchfork media and a large number of user reviews reference the tracks *Little Bird* and *I’m Bound To Pack It Up* directly to the approach of the 1970s rock group. The comparisons to a hugely successful pioneering group of the past could be viewed as a discourse that both results from and is perpetuated by a condition of fandom, and expressed in an online media format. However, there are a number of similarities worth indicating. Led Zeppelin also relied on a sound crafted on the dissonances between harmony and melody through the use of blue notes, and exhibited such in reciprocal interplay amongst members of the group, creating what Hans Weisethaunet refers to as ‘blue harmony’ and ‘blue texture’ respectively (Weisethaunet, 2001, p. 105). They varied and reimagined the ‘blues’ sound through the adoption of acoustic and electric approaches to sound production, as on albums such as *Led Zeppelin*, *Led Zeppelin II*, and *Led Zeppelin III*. Additionally, both groups covered the songs of traditional blues musicians on their first two albums, Led Zeppelin interpreted the songs of Willie Dixon including *You Shook Me* (*Led Zeppelin*) and *Bring it on Home* (*Led Zeppelin II*), and The White Stripes covered Robert Johnson’s *Stop Breaking Down Blues* on their first album and Son House’s *Death Letter Blues* on *De Stijl*. Whilst the music of The White Stripes could be described as far more simplistic in terms of the interplay between musicians where there is less focus on ‘blue texture’, the similarities in style and overall approach with that of Led Zeppelin are an indication of listener perception of *De Stijl*.

One online customer review of *De Stijl* refers to a ‘satisfyingly hard blues edge’ and judges the track *Hello Operator* to be ‘a powerful slice of blues’ (Andy Sweeney, 2013); another more recent review refers to the track *Sister Do You Know My Name?* as ‘a slow blues number’ and *A Boy’s Best Friend* as ‘an even slower blues number’ (John F., 2015). Other reviews refer both to the currency of the music and its retro sound - ‘*Hello Operator* and *Little Bird* are proof the modern blues are alive and well’ (Julie E., 2012); ‘it throws in some damn fine Delta Blues’ (Dean M. George, 2015); and ‘the album is laden with Jack’s slide guitar and he sounds like some of the best classic blues players of the past’ (Matthew Culpepper, 2005). What should be made clear is that the majority of

these reviews have appeared over a decade after the artefact was originally released and whilst a proportion may be the result of listening to the album for the first time, nostalgia also plays a part in the expressions of fandom that often characterise consumer reviews such as those described above. There is also the possibility that the album ‘speaks’ more conductively to listeners and their present experiences of life than it did in the past, and it is important to remember that each reviewer’s aesthetic positioning may be shaped by a range of factors including those relating to social and political aspects, current popular trends, and intertextual references and so on (for an example of the impact of nostalgia on the development of the blues, see chapter two, pp. 117-118).

Reviews left on Amazon websites in the UK and the US reveal that 78% of customers felt the album was worthy of a five-star rating and *De Stijl* has an overall average score of 4.65 out of 5 from a total of 217 reviews to date. Although not every individual who purchases the independently released album will have an inclination to post a review, and that such opinions may change over time as aesthetic beliefs change, if equating authenticity with value then it can be said that the majority of reviewers felt the album met their expectations. Various contributions on both sites also allude to notions of blues authenticity perceived to be manifested in the artefact itself which bears a ‘stripped-down rawness’, delivered in a ‘personal way’ exhibiting an ‘honest’ quality which is ‘refreshing’ when contrasted with the more ‘manufactured’ popular music acts of the day (The White Stripes - *De Stijl* - Amazon.com Music, 2016; *De Stijl*: Amazon.co.uk: Music, 2016).

The album was initially released on the independent label Sympathy for the Record Industry and eventually reached number 38 in the US Independent Albums chart in 2002 (Billboard, 2018b). Although the album was commercially less successful than the subsequent album, the production values and the role it has played in establishing the musical and visual style of the group, particularly as a live act, has meant that *De Stijl* has since become one of the groups’ most revered albums by fans and critics alike, and with all authenticity of experience considered, can be viewed as successful in achieving second-person authenticity.

## Authenticity of Execution

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the issue of blues authenticity is one Jack White appears to have been aware of long before he recorded the first album with The White Stripes and in order to both engage with the tradition and simultaneously avoid being labelled as inauthentic, White needed to navigate and cross boundaries demarcated on the grounds of race, class, and geographical location. With respect to the traditions of the music, White intended to reimagine the blues beyond identification admitting that the group were 'trying to trick people into not realising we were playing the blues' as they 'did not want to come off like white kids trying to play black music from 100 years ago' (Manzoor, 2010). The 'trick' in White's comment here refers to the calculated visual elements present in live performances and music videos that consist primarily of a red, white, and black colour scheme. Such manufactured processes may not only be adopted to distract an audience but also boost the commercial value of the group through a strong brand identity that results in increased music sales. In this respect, White navigates the commercial/folk dichotomy that has characterised blues music in discourse since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (for discussion of folk/mass dichotomy in the blues and in hip-hop, see pp. 17-20, 55).

Consequently, the calculated imagery must appear to be subordinate to aspects that promote a realness and authenticity and White achieves this in a number of ways. He continuously pays tribute to the musicians who have inspired him in both interviews given to the press and in album liner note dedications to blues performers such as Blind Willie McTell and Son House. White records and performs blues cover songs and in the process, promotes retro analogue recording techniques and equipment. Finally, in addition to the rerelease of blues recordings of the past through his own record label, White advocates the vinyl record listening format. As a result of these efforts, White has been seen by some as an ambassador of the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, it is a title he tries to avoid stating 'I do get confused as to what my role is. I fall into the trap of feeling like I have to convert kids to Son House. But over the last year I've decided I don't want that job anymore' (White in Tolinski, 2006, p. 116). White again shows a

consciousness of the perceptions of blues authenticity, which when taken with his apparent ambivalent approach to music production, suggests that the ideologies of the past both stifle creativity and are laborious to continually navigate. In essence, White can be noted to be navigating the same notions of authenticity that were not only directed at blues musicians of the 1960s but contemporary hip-hop artists also, who maybe negatively deemed 'sell outs' if they fail to adhere to standards of authenticity that constitute and are imbued in the phrase 'keeping it real' (see p. 19 and Forman, 2002, pp. 215-216; Perry, 2004, p. 136).

There is no doubting the profound influence of early blues pioneers on The White Stripes' sound and their admiration for the likes of Robert Johnson, Charley Patton, and Son House. Nevertheless, in a cover song such as *Death Letter* the blueprint recording by Son House titled *Death Letter Blues*, is reimagined not only in the truncation of song title but through differences in instrumentation as in the addition of a drum part, and timbre through use of a heavily distorted guitar tone. However, it is also apparent The White Stripes clearly had the original recording in mind when they recorded their own version (as highlighted in the discussion of musical expression earlier in this chapter) but intended to update the song in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century context whilst simultaneously adhering to the traditions of the past.

Whilst many critics and fans seem to accept the band as authentic, other successful blues orientated artists such as Eric Clapton have appeared to question the duo's approach:

Eric Clapton, for example, said he didn't like The White Stripes. He thought we were having a laugh about Son House, playing 'Death Letter' on the Grammys. People in that Stratocaster white blues scene didn't understand that we could dress in red and white and black, play in the simplistic way we did, and still be the blues (White cited in Mulvey, 2012).

In the aforementioned Grammy award performance in 2004, the band combined tradition with contemporary technology. Jack White utilised a Kay acoustic guitar and conventional slide guitar technique and amplified the guitar with additional distortion,

augmenting the sound further through utilisation of a Digitech Whammy pedal which provided dramatic pitch-altering effects. One could remark this effect mimicked the excitability of White's vocal approach to *Death Letter* on the evening, seemingly far removed from the more dignified and understated approach taken during the studio recording. In Clapton's view then the groups' reimagining of the blues did indeed transform the tradition (see p. 65) beyond what was acceptable, in a performance that was perceived to have demonstrated a lack of reverence for such traditions of the past. However, for the criticism that the group have had, revered musicians such as Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, and Bob Dylan have all signified their approval of the group in interviews and live performances. In a dual interview with B.B. King, Beck praised the recording approach of the group noting the 'fresh' and 'raw' sounding outcome whilst King repeated his acknowledgement that his longevity was down to young musicians performing and listening to the blues (Emmerson, 2003). Bob Dylan also invited White to perform with him at a concert in 2004 after White discovered Dylan's band covering a White Stripes song during a sound check (Chai, 2012).

As demonstrated in chapter four, the development and expansion of the blues sound itself is nothing new as a large number of musicians have attempted to expand the conventional boundaries of the blues sound through experimentation with electric technology. However, the multidimensional approach that encompasses visual, musical, and biographical factors utilised by the group has contributed to an increased awareness of the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even if these performances and recordings push the boundaries for some critics in what they believe to be authentic blues music. The White Stripes earned the admiration of hugely successful blues-based musicians, as circulated in the music press, and which contributed to the group achieving a measure of authenticity in representing the ideas of long gone country blues musicians in a contemporary context. In examining both listener perception of authenticity and performer experience in *De Stijl* through utilisation of the terms proposed by Moore (2002), this chapter has shown it is possible to interpret contemporary recordings and the cultural impact of such through a measurement of how notions of authenticity are entwined with each stage of the music production process, supporting Moore's view that the term has meaning and value in

discussion of popular music styles. The work here illustrates how contemporary musicians may calculate and navigate such notions in creative decision-making and how such calculations impact on how cultural artefacts are ultimately received.

## **Chapter 6: Reimagining the Blues in *Cleveland***

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, a musicological and textual analysis of the song *Cleveland* (Algiers, 2017) by the group known as Algiers is conducted in order to offer an assessment of the potentiality of a contemporary popular music artefact to convey meaning, and foreground the links to past traditions associated with the blues as both a cultural expressive form and as a music style. In doing so, the underexplored area of musical semantics in relation to the sociocultural field in popular music will be addressed (Tagg, 2012, p. 175; Moore, 2012, p. 5; Beard & Gloag, 2016, p. 227). Additionally, the work demonstrates how the blues is reimagined in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by musicians and listeners through illustration of both the formal elements of contemporary popular song construction and the possible meanings that the music, through lyrical and non-lyrical content, connote.

A key research question in selecting this piece of music for analysis is how are narratives of the blues manifested in contemporary US society? The proposed belief is that participant engagement with the blues as both a music style and as a meta-genre reflects cross-cultural tensions at the heart of contemporary US society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main ethnomusicological challenge in this enquiry lies in identifying a location within which to search and ensure that such a search features appropriate boundaries. In other words, how do you avoid the misconceptions of the past (see pp. 74, 146-147, and for discussion of racialisation of music, see pp. 21-27) and select a particular piece of music without racial bias towards one ethnic group or another? To overcome this obstacle, a unique and original methodological approach is adopted. Initially, a review of flashpoints featuring racial protest in the period between 2000 and 2017 is carried out through online research of news and media websites. The shooting of Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio in 2014 received widespread national and international media coverage for the reason that the African American was only twelve-years-old when he was shot dead by a white police officer who believed the replica toy gun the boy was holding to be

a real weapon. Although the Black Lives Matter activist movement had initially started to appear on social media platforms with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in 2013, the shooting of Tamir Rice also proved to be a significant catalyst for the movement with numerous subsequent social protests across the US and the formation of international Black Lives Matter chapters in Australia, Canada, and the UK. This particular event, therefore, stands out as exceptional and in so being increases the likelihood of musicians and listeners engaging with the event.

In order to identify an audio artefact for analysis, the next step involves making a connection between this flashpoint and music, and this is achieved through the Internet search term 'song for Tamir Rice'. This term partly reflects how musicians and/or listeners may engage with or reflect the cross-cultural tension in society through the specification of a particular event in online media searches, otherwise conducted routinely by Internet users who merely want to read the news. It is suggested the search terms 'song for protest' or 'song of protest' for example, do not address the research question stated above adequately and it is equally suggested that if an Internet user wished to engage with social protest, he/she would use less ambiguous phrases and search for a specific theme of protest or event as selected here. Whilst the individual in this tragedy is of a black cultural identity, it is important to point out that the search results derived from the aforementioned phrase have the potential to feature *cross-cultural* engagement in the form of music artefacts, just as the Black Lives Matter movement is noted to feature white participants.

In order to reflect the 'neutral' Internet user and to avoid any bias towards blues-marketed music artefacts derived from previous web activity in the online search, it is necessary to firstly, clear the cache and search history of the web browser and secondly, depersonalise Google by clearing both the search history and pausing activity controls that consist of web and application activity, location history, device information, voice and audio activity, YouTube search history, and YouTube watch history. After entering the appropriate term into the Google search engine, the first page of ten results appears and the song *Cleveland*, released by the group Algiers in 2017, is referenced most frequently with three out of the ten media links referring to their engagement with the

Tamir Rice flashpoint through music. Through a number of methods of analysis including semiotics, intertextuality, and music-theoretic, and in the responses of participants in the appropriate LLEs in the following chapter, the links between social protest and the blues in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century artefact can, therefore, be examined.

The primary foundation to musicological analysis in this chapter is derived from a combination of Eric F. Clarke's (2005) ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning, and aspects of Philip Tagg's (2012) semiotic approach to musical meaning. Clarke builds on the formulations presented by American psychologist James J. Gibson in his ecological approach to visual perception and theory of affordance (Gibson, 1966), whilst Tagg adapts the semiotic theory of US philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Peirce, 1982). Tagg's development of a sign typology (see pp. 58-59) is utilised here as a particularly useful analytical framework with which to uncover what musical structures may connote to a listener, aiding in the development of narrative, whilst the sign types defined within this framework are in accordance with the direct perception of the ecological approach as they specify the sound sources in the environment (Clarke, 2005, pp. 46-47).

All three main sign types in Tagg's typology could be considered, at any given point in the listening of a piece of music, as invariant properties of a song affording a variety of responses from a listener, depending on what the sound source specifies and the cultural environment within which a listener perceives such sounds and, as Moore (2012) suggests, the development of the ecological approach to perception can be understood as 'reformulating the Peircean concepts of iconicity and indexicality in terms of everyday perception' (Moore, 2012, p. 243). Therefore, aspects of both approaches are combined here in a complementary manner to articulate possible meanings in *Cleveland* and the sociocultural links in everyday life. Additionally, a formal music theoretic and technological analysis is also drawn upon to broaden the scope of detail in illustrating how the music refers 'within itself' and supplements the external references brought about through a semiotic reading.

The technological processes, particularly those associated with digital recording, sequencing, and sampling within the stages of conception and realisation, prominent in most contemporary recorded popular music forms, have often been ignored in musicological analysis at the expense of the formal elements of musical structure (Warner, 2009). In ethnomusicology, on the other hand, and as demonstrated in chapters two (for example, see pp. 116-122) and four of this thesis (for example, see pp. 166-169), technology has been a key concern for researchers both in the past, as advances in technology enabled live music performances in remote locations to be captured in sound recordings and thus, played an important role in the development of ethnomusicology as a field (see also Poole, 2015; Baily, 2010; Lyslof & Gay, 2003); and in the present, as ethnomusicologists explore areas such as the impact of digital recording technologies on the transformation of indigenous communities and perceptions of such in global contexts (for example, Hilder, 2017; Montero-Diaz, 2017; Tan, 2017), and the relationships between objects and humans in music-making processes (for example, Bates, 2016; 2012; Quintero, 2018; Baily & Driver, 1992).

In this analysis, technological insight is incorporated in order to reveal how these aspects enable musicians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to reimagine the traditions of the past using contemporary technological processes. In doing so use is made of Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen's (2010) terms 'opaque mediation' and 'transparent mediation' that refer to the detection (or not) of technological mediation in the perception of the identity of a sound source, or in other words transparent mediation indicates that the listener ignores the mediation, while opaque mediation suggests that the listener's focus is drawn towards mediating acts (Brøvig-Hanssen, 2010, p. 159). Instances of opaque mediation could also be considered as semiotic, with the potential to allude to style and genre synchronically through technological means and in this way, therefore, could be considered within Tagg's style flag category.

In terms of music theoretic analysis, a modal approach to harmony derived from jazz theory (Rawlins & Bahha, 2005; Pease & Mattingly, 2003) is adopted in the examples provided here as it more closely reflects both the language and harmonic practices utilised by popular musicians in the conception and realisation of musical materials than

does a Schenkerian approach which reflects those of the Western classical canon (Moore, 1995, pp. 186-187), and through which permits the identification of root notes in harmonic structures with familiar modal labels. Secondly, as Moore (2012) points out, most popular musicians think about harmony in terms of vertical pitch structures that exist as chords ‘rather than as the resultants of horizontal movements of separate contrapuntal voices’ that would characterise a Schenkerian analysis (Moore, 2012, p. 71).

The object that provides the source of analysis in this chapter is a studio recording downloaded from a popular online music retailer in a high-quality mp3 format encoded with a bit rate of 320kbps. This format is congruent with current listening trends that show an increasing preference for streaming services and digital downloads (IFPI, 2018) that almost unanimously utilise the same compressed format. The song is then imported into Steinberg’s Wavelab audio processing software to take advantage of the metering facilities such as the frequency spectrum analyser and level meter, and to obtain a graphical display of the audio waveform. Timings of events in the piece are noted in this environment and repeated listening is performed using headphones. Musical transcriptions are performed in Avid’s Sibelius scoring software, and a live spectrogram analysis of the piece was enabled through an application called LiveSpectrogram (Ellis, 2012).

The structure of the song analysis begins with a consideration of the general features that could be regarded as invariants of the environment, and an overview of the form with structural timings. An exploration of the music is followed by lyrical analysis, and then interphonographic, paraphonographic, and metaphonographic aspects are also examined. The intended aim is that this structure loosely follows the order in which the song is encountered from the analyst’s perspective in that apart from the title of the piece, the music is consumed in the first instance including aspects of the way in which the song was recorded, mixed, and mastered followed by an awareness and comprehension of the song lyrics, and then further research performed into other transphonographic practices is carried out afterwards. Of course, the depth of analysis presented here is the result of both repeated listening and multimodal research but the general aim is that this structure

takes into account both the sequential order of analysis and the congruous nature of everyday listening.

## General Features

### Form

As autonomic samples [A] and [B] provide much of the foundation for the song it is possible to provide an outline of the song structure that refers to the use of these elements and that will be used as a reference point in the rest of this chapter. All timings are taken from the audio file in Wavelab and the word chorus in parentheses is used to both distinguish the stated section with the actual chorus section and signal the similarities of the use of sample [A] that are familiar to both:

00:00-00:16	Introduction	8 bars [A]
00:16-00:32	Verse 1	8 bars [B]
00:32-00:48	(Chorus)	8 bars [A] as heard in the Introduction
00:48-01:04	Verse 2	8 bars [B]
01:04-01:20	Chorus	8 bars [A] starts on bar 5
01:20-01:36	Verse 3	8 bars [B]
01:36-01:52	Chorus	8 bars [A] starts on bar 5
01:52-02:24	Bridge	16 bars

02:24-02:56	(Chorus)	16 bars [A] starts on bar 5 and 13
02:56-03:12	Verse 4	8 bars [B] starts on bar 5
03:12-03:28	Chorus	8 bars [A] starts on bar 5
03:28-03:44	Coda	8 bars [B]

The song also incorporates elements of the call and response tradition (for example, see chapter three, p. 136 and chapter two, p. 115) which is analysed here during the bridge passage where the feature is deemed most prominent. There is also reference throughout, to the antiphonal relationship between the autsonic gospel samples (see interphonography, pp. 232-233) and the lead vocal that may be deemed a reimagining of the call and response relationship between the vocal and the guitar in the traditions of the blues (see chapter four, pp. 159-160).

## Texture

Moore's (2012) conceptualisation of the functionality of instruments in four textural layers is a useful way of articulating what is happening and where throughout a song, as particularly in recorded music, instruments and voices may take on different functions in the development of a single piece of music or section. It is the primary function of the 'explicit beat layer' to 'articulate an explicit pattern of beats, the major constituent of "groove"'. In *Cleveland*, this layer is primarily occupied by electronic percussion instruments and digital samples that may be performed in real-time, and two 2-bar drum patterns provide the foundations of 'groove' within this layer for most of the song. The 'functional bass layer' may also contribute to the 'groove' in addition to connecting 'root position harmonies in one or more ways'. Electronic bass instruments and sampled sounds that occupy the bass and sub-bass frequency ranges sit within this layer. The

‘melodic layer’ consists of the male sung voice which throughout the song engages at various points with sample [A] and [B], and other instrumental and digitally sampled effects during the middle of the song. Finally, the ‘harmonic filler layer’ consists of synthesiser patches, samples, and string pads, in addition, to sample [A] that also occupies this layer from time to time (Moore, 2012, pp. 20-21).

## **Tempo**

The song is recorded with a *moderato* tempo or  $q = 120$  which is the standard default tempo setting for popular digital audio recording software such as Avid’s Pro Tools, Apple’s Logic Pro and Steinberg’s Cubase. There are no noticeable deviations from this within the song and such strict adherence to this suggests the use of a click track and/or the use of digital sequencing techniques to provide a tempo guide for the lead vocals in the form of a backing track.

## **Harmony**

*Cleveland* features Aeolian mode (or natural minor) harmony, common in rock music styles, and is subjectively one step ‘darker’ than the Dorian mode due to its characteristic flattened sixth note. The Aeolian scale formula is as follows:

R, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7

In Bb Aeolian, the scale includes all of the notes of the Bb and Eb minor pentatonic scales (R, b3, 4, 5, b7). Harmonising each scale step of the Aeolian mode results in the triads i, ii, bIII, iv, v, bVI, bVII (i, ii, iv and v are minor chords and bIII, bVI and bVII are major chords).

## Audio Production & Mastering

*Cleveland* is noted to be heavily compressed. Audio compression in the mastering process has been applied through a ‘brick-wall’ limiting technique and which has resulted in little dynamic range, as a basic visual reference to the audio waveform confirms:

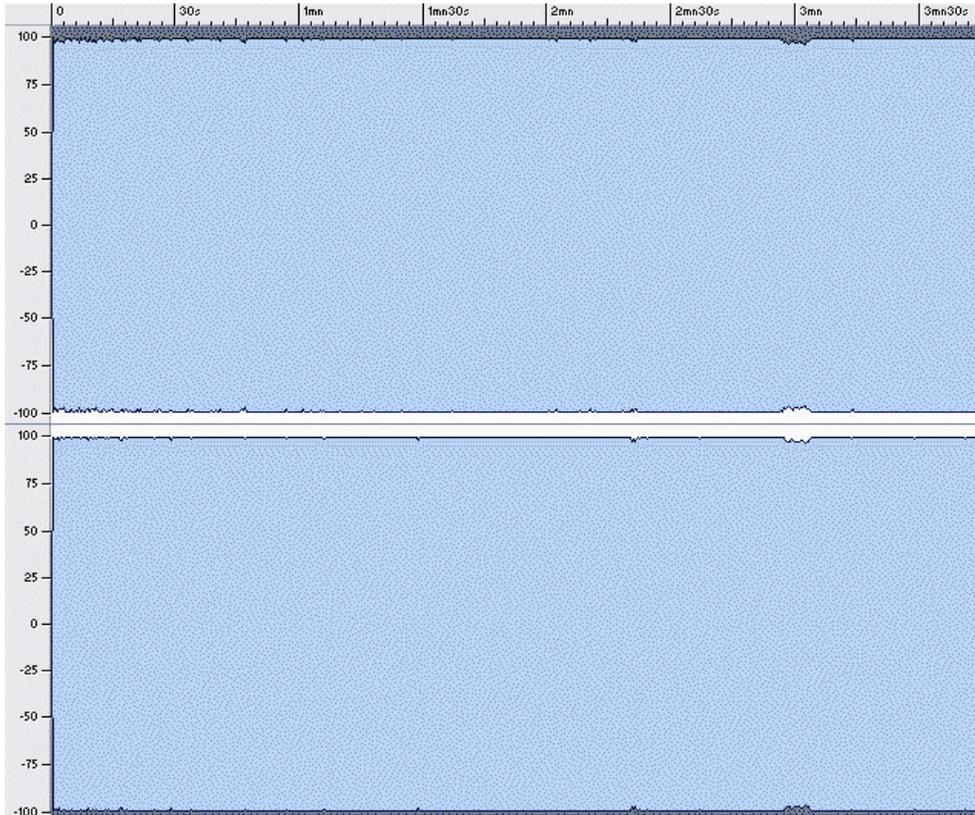


Figure 3: Audio waveform of *Cleveland* in Steinberg's *Wavelab*

With RMS levels varying between -5.81dB and -8.00dB, the song has been mastered to compete with other contemporary recordings in ongoing loudness wars in popular music production (Deruty, 2011). As discussed in chapter four (for example, see pp. 162-163), the desire to stand out through varying concepts of loudness is in itself an aesthetic tradition of popular recorded song including those categorised as representative of blues music.

## Musical Analysis

### 00:00-00:16 Introduction

The song begins with two noticeable sources, an electronic drum kit and the sound of a gospel choir. It almost immediately becomes apparent through opaque mediation processes that the gospel choir is an audio sample due to both its production values signifying a recording from another time and the manner in which the sample is triggered on the first beat of each bar. The precision in timing with which the sample is reiterated and the aesthetics of production suggests it is an autsonic sample. Upon hearing a group of people sing powerfully in a homophonic style, a sense of togetherness is noted in addition to the feeling that some sort of statement is being made and directed towards the listener through the insistence of the looped sample. In addition to connoting another time, the black American style of religious singing directly references the gospel genre and the sacred and black oral tradition. Tagg (2012) classifies style flag sign types as being comprised of genre synecdoche sign types and style indicators, the latter of which contribute to the establishment of a “home” musical style through the invariant properties of the piece or ‘compositional norms’ of a given style. If accepting that the home style of the song is alternative rock (for the purposes of this analysis it is), the reference to gospel music in the stylistic nature of the digital snapshot can be referred to as a genre synecdoche, and creates a sense of difference ‘by citing one or more elements supposed to be typical of that “other” style when heard in the context of the “home” style’ (Tagg, 2012, p. 524).

Within the audio sample, taken from *Peace Be Still* (see pp. 232-233) there is also a short descending piano motif that accompanies the gospel choir stressing the flattened sixth (F), root (Bb) and flattened seventh (Ab) of Bb Aeolian mode.



Figure 4: Piano motif in audio sample

This motif is locked in a call and response relationship with the choir in the audio sample but also punctuates and frames the lead vocal part in *Cleveland*, as it appears towards the end of each vocal line every time sample [A] and [B] are sounded throughout. It may therefore be considered as a *leitmotiv* in the song and affords contrasting degrees of space to the lead vocal depending on whether sample [A] or [B] are triggered. Consequently, a sense of closeness can be detected in song sections such as the introduction and chorus and a greater degree of openness is afforded in each verse section.

A sense of contrast is also partly constructed in the perceived distance in time between the contents of the autsonic sample (the past) and the aesthetic quality of the drum kit sounds that are indicative of the electronic music genre (EDM) popular in this century and representative of the present. The electronic drums sounds could also be considered as style indicators of contemporary alternative rock and therefore a home style but most importantly they represent the present. The perceived strictness of the quantisation of the drum parts suggests that they were programmed electronically in the track production process as opposed to performed as such, but nonetheless they provide a sense of movement and exist collectively as a kinetic anaphone. The velocity with which each attack of the snare drum is conducted could be perceived to be reflective of the ‘crack’ of a whip, and in a non-vocal form therefore represents ‘the musical stylisation of sound that exists outside the discourse of music’ and categorised as a sonic anaphone (Tagg, 2012, p. 487). The cracking of a whip affords the mobilisation of people into action through beating and with this brings connotative links to slavery (for example, see chapter two, pp. 87-89). The track also features variations on a dotted drum pattern transcribed in the following figure:



Figure 5: Main rhythmic drum pattern in *Cleveland*

As noted elsewhere (see chapter three, pp. 137-139 and also *Alabama* in chapter seven, p. 258), dotted patterns are common in African and African American rhythmic practices

and such a beat grouping is present throughout the explicit beat layer here. Therefore at this level of analysis, there is a signalling of traditional practice through contemporary forms of technology in the electronic drum sounds utilised throughout the song. The figure also illustrates a common time metre, half-time rhythmic feel and an emphasis on strong beats, such as in the placement of snare drum hits accenting beat three in each bar. The amount of signal processing evident in the overall mix of the piece, including large amounts of reverberation, suggests a recording intended for personal listening environments at home through speakers or headphones rather than in a public space such as a nightclub. The creation of a virtual acoustic space contains a number of spatial anaphones that exist inherently in the sample utilised, that itself suggests a crowded space within an open and public environment, and in the signal processing of both the layered sound sources, such as individual snare drum hits, and the overall mix. The snare drum and kick drum sounds are positioned centrally within the stereo image whilst the gospel sample appears omnipresent.

#### 00:16-00:32 Verse 1

The most noticeable characteristic at the start of this section is the entry of the lead vocal part which is articulated with a powerful delivery and emphasises the sustained notes in the melody, particularly between the range of E5 and G#5. These combined elements give the impression of a sounding air raid siren that urges a call to action and affords the mobilisation of a collective group of people. The vocal part is positioned centrally in the stereo mix and dominates the musical accompaniment, and as a short deep intake of breath is heard before straining on the word 'tell' (00:23-00:24) the vocal distorts emphasising both pain and anger. The pain is emphasised by the deeply resonant quality of the voice and through use of wide vibrato that provides notable pitch inflections throughout the song. The use of microtonal elements carry strong connotations of black vocal technique and, in conjunction with the use of blue notes, are often associated with an honest musical approach and/or performance (for example, see chapter three, pp. 133-134, and chapter five, p. 195). As music psychologists Patrik N. Juslin and Petri Laukka (2003) highlight, emotion has a demonstrable affect on vocal timbre suggesting that

‘depending on the specific physiological state, one may expect to find specific acoustic features in the voice’ (Juslin & Laukka, 2003, p. 773). Despite the problematic associations made between race and music, as discussed in this thesis (see pp. 21-27 and chapter two, p. 124), the history and development of the blues has largely cemented the notion of irregularities of pitch, time, timbre, and vibrato as being crucial to African-American performance. Such an approach has been described as ‘vernacular delivery’ defined as ‘vocal qualities and lexical choices attributable to blues styles of vocal and instrumental performance’ (Barlow, 2016, p. 145), and as stated in chapter three (see p. 159), an emotional code can be harnessed and transmitted in performance through such articulations, emphasising particular emotions, closely associated with the blues, such as anger as exemplified here and throughout *Cleveland*. The white, soul music singer Adele is noted (Edgar, 2014) to incorporate a black emotional code through vocal straining that is exemplified by sounds that indicate a lack of breathe and a forced distortion of the vocal tone which encourages vocal fatigue (see also Brackett, 2000, pp. 108-156). Collectively, these vocal effects provide what may be described as a heightened emotional performance that connote a perceived authenticity and are present early on within the song analysed here.

The distortion triggered by the semi-shouted approach is also a test of the technological boundaries of the production environment and signifies power and something on the verge of collapse indicating bodily risk and danger. The testing of such boundaries in this way could be interpreted as risking the possibility of ‘death’ through the temptation of the technological equivalent that is audio silence. The proximity of the vocal to the listener, that is positioned centrally at a medium distance and in conjunction with the gospel sample in an extended form, that now appears to answer or provide support to the lead vocal part, affords the perception of communication between a preacher and his congregation.

#### 00:32-00:48 (Chorus)

In this section, the same sample is triggered at the start of each bar as in the introduction but there is a noticeable electronic synthesised bass instrument occupying frequencies

within the sub-bass (20Hz to 60Hz) and bass (60Hz to 250Hz) ranges. The envelope of the instrument resembles that produced by a physical electric bass as there is a short attack segment to the shape that resembles the ‘plucking’ of a string.

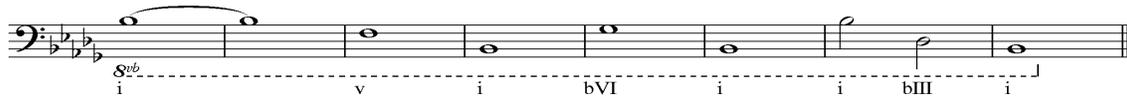


Figure 6: Bass part [00:32-00:48]

The contour of the bass part in this section, as seen in the above figure, is noted to descend repeatedly in pitch to the root note giving a sense of being pulled downward. The word ‘swear’ (00:40) stands out in the mix as the word is articulated with powerful melisma. There are cymbal crashes panned to the right of the stereo image and positioned at a comparatively moderate level. The vocalisation of ‘hey hey’ could be considered as a vocal episodic unidimensional marker in that the simple melodic figure rises in pitch in a unidirectional manner and signals the imminent arrival of the next section (Tagg, 2012, p. 516).

#### 00:48-01:04 Verse 2

Tagg (2012) defines episodic determinants as ‘the constituent ingredients of what sounds characteristic for the duration of the musical episode in question’ (Tagg, 2012, p. 516). In this section, episodic determinants may be identified as the semiquaver hi-hat pattern positioned slightly to the left of centre in the mix but below the level of the vocal, and the electronic bass now emphasising movement through descending *glissandi* to indeterminate pitches. Both the pitch and articulated pattern of the hi-hat could be categorised within the fine-motoric aspect of kinetic anaphones indicating a more delicate type of movement such as clicking or ticking (Tagg, 2012, p. 499). The increase in rhythmic density provides a sense of momentum building in the song and is further suggested by a hi-hat fill (00:56) that pushes the music forward with a rapid flurry of 32<sup>nd</sup> notes. The electronic bass part in this section can be considered as a sonic, kinetic, and spatial anaphone in that it indicates movement downwards both in pitch and virtual space

and, more intensely than in the previous section, represents something falling towards the centre of the earth signifying a gravitational force. When combined with the increased momentum afforded by the hi-hat pattern, the perceived effects of the bass part act as an additional force on the protagonist in the song, pulling the character in different directions.

The section also yields further relationships between the parts of instruments in defining the vertical dimensions of the stereo image. As the descending pitch *glissandi* in the bass part illustrate the bottom of the listening space, a soft synthesiser pad emerges in the opposite direction as it swells in the mix enabled through what can be perceived as the opening of a low-pass filter. This down/up binary relationship between the parts is also reflected in the gospel sample [B] within which the pitch direction also repeatedly moves down and up as it is retriggered. These elements can be considered as spatial, sonic, and kinetic anaphones and the repetition of such relationships provides a feeling of relentlessness that alludes to the operation of machinery. This allusion is also made in the clearly quantised articulation of the percussive fill (01:02) that defines the right channel boundary of the horizontal plane. This sonic, kinetic, and spatial anaphone also acts as an episodic marker in its propulsive reiteration towards the next section. Tagg (2012) identifies such sign types, where there is an increase in the surface rate, as common devices ‘for propelling the music towards whatever comes next’ (Tagg, 2012, p. 518).

#### 01:04-01:20 Chorus

A string pad is sounded in the harmonic filler layer as a tactile anaphone with a bowed attack and sustained envelope providing a smooth texture, although this is contrasted with the more abrasive and powerful lead vocal that remains the focal point.

The defining harmonic feature of the chorus is the major to minor bVI – i pattern illustrated in the bass part:

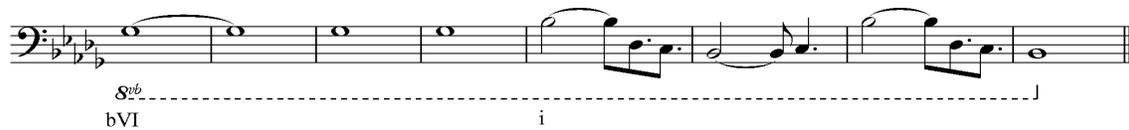


Figure 7: Bass part in the chorus of Cleveland

This simple harmonic structure provides the foundation for the main vocal melody (figure 8 below) within which the words operate within a larger ‘verbal space’, defined by Dai Griffiths (2003) as ‘the pop song’s basic compromise: the words agree to work within the spaces of tonal music’s phrases, and the potential expressive intensity of music’s melody is held back for the sake of clarity of verbal communication’ (Griffiths, 2003, p. 43). However, in this section of the music, it is suggested that although the words operate within each suggested musical phrase or line, the potential expressive intensity of the melody is relatively unrestrained and thus leads to slight ambiguity in the interpreting of the words. Consequently, the relatively large amount of verbal space occupied by relatively few vowels, notably in the word ‘innocence’ in the chorus provides a sense of freedom when compared to the more densely packed verses.

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Figure 8: Vocal melody in the chorus of Cleveland

The vocal melody itself stays diatonically linked to Gb major for the first four bars except for three augmented sixth intervals that are more easily perceived as flattened sevenths, the enharmonic equivalent. In addition, a rising minor third interval is stressed at the start of bar 5 in the change to Bb minor on the word ‘day’ and there is also the step-wise

descent of a minor third from Db to Bb on ‘oh yes it is’ with a passing major second (C). A raised seventh (A natural) leading to Bb suggests the harmonic minor mode momentarily. The articulation of flattened seventh and third intervals in each chordal context provides contrasting effects that are linked to the traditions of the past (see discussion of blue notes, pp. 36-39 and chapter three, pp. 133-135).

Echo is applied to parts of the vocal with the repetitions of (inno-)‘cence is alive’ and ‘day’ creating a ‘swirling’ effect as a sonic and kinetic anaphone of the effect of dizziness. The signal processing of parts of the vocal appears to clash within the same space as the gospel sample and creates a sense of confusion and disorientation. The vocal approach to the articulation of ‘oh is alive’ resembles the proclamation of a preacher, but also alludes quite closely to the famous gothic horror quotation ‘it’s alive’ in Mary Shelley’s 1818 novel *Frankenstein* in which the character Dr Frankenstein’s creation is brought to life and can no longer be controlled by its master. In this context ‘innocence’, or the innocent, could be considered as the equivalent of Frankenstein’s monster and are seeking revenge on their oppressors, gaining autonomy and so much momentum as a collective group of people that they can and will not be stopped in pursuing justice. A centrally emerging electronic synthesised sound (01:09) captures the attention with both a notable kinetic energy and narrow frequency band that cuts through the instrumentation in the mix affording the tactility of ‘sharpness’. It could, therefore, be considered the sonic anaphone of a knife and wielded by the oppressed in fulfilment of their objective. Finally, there is also another hi-hat pattern comprised of semiquavers (01:13) that contributes to the kinetic energy perceived in this section.

### 01:20-01:36 Verse 3

In this verse, more syncopated snare drum hits are heard, performed with greater velocity than in previous sections, and there is an additional snare drum with a noticeably lighter timbre panned to the right. A synthesised pad with a dark tone colour (01:23) continually swells throughout the section as a non-vocal sonic anaphone, in that swelling affords augmentation that may be related to the effects of a bodily injury. The gradual

emergence and disappearance of the pad instrument in the mix is noticeable through its repetition, it keeps coming back. This could suggest that despite injury the oppressed will not be stopped in their quest for justice.

#### 01:36-01:52 Chorus

A hi-hat provides some contrast to the last chorus section adding to the increasing momentum in the song as a kinetic anaphora. There is a clear sense of emotion portrayed in the slightly loose approach to pitch which verges on yelling (01:39) perhaps suggesting desperation (see also chapter five, p. 195), and the words expressed in the vocals (01:45) are almost incoherent through the heavily accented articulation providing a rhythmic effect that alludes to the approach of singers such as James Brown, who incidentally was noted to have been heavily influenced by the performances of gospel preachers as he strived to develop his stage persona (Maultsby, 2017, p. 49). Also apparent in this chorus is the pitch variation noted in the approach to words such as ‘day’ which in this instance is articulated more directly with a singular higher pitch than in the rising melisma applied in the previous chorus. The confusion and dizziness remain through the application of echo and repetition to parts of the vocal mirroring the effects perceived in the previous chorus section and momentum is maintained through further propulsive reiteration on the snare drum in accordance with a vocal link to the next section.

#### 01:52-02:24 Bridge

Immediate contrast is provided at the start of this section through the omission of the gospel sample contributing to a sense of spatial clarity afforded by the sudden decrease in the textural density of the harmonic filler layer, in which there are also no dizzying echo effects or synth pads. This new texture enables attention to be drawn more directly to the electronic bass part that now appears to be both rhythmically more dense than in previous sections with the use of occasional semiquavers but also features an additional noise element, perhaps constituted in a layered second ‘voice’, that enables the bass part to sound more abrasive than those encountered previously in the song. A sixteenth-note

percussive pattern appears slightly distorted and ‘clicky’ as perhaps a style indicator of lo-fi indie music, bitpop, or alternative rock of the 1990s to 2000s, partly through allusion to low bit depth processing often the result of either use of early limited digital recording equipment, or through the intentional or unintentional misuse of recording equipment that results in what is generally accepted as a low quality sound aesthetic.

From the beginning of this section (01:52) there is a call and response relationship (see chapter three, pp. 136-137) between the lead vocal part and a collective group who repeatedly shout the response ‘we’re coming back’ to each call. Each response appears alternately in the right and then left position of the stereo image and provides a sense of unity through supporting the lead vocal part that now more clearly reflects the role of a preacher leading his congregation. Solidarity is exemplified in this vocal arrangement as the lead vocal part not only provides the question but also repeats the answer shouted by the collective group with additional interjections such as ‘ah!’ (02:11 and 02:14), further bringing to mind James Brown’s aesthetic practices and notions of exuberant black preaching, and thus clearly making cultural references to the gospel tradition through the use of shouting, call and response interplay, and a feeling of movement emphasised in the accompanying instrumentation.

Tension is created (02:00) through combination of two kinetic and spatial anaphones, the first a high pitched ‘piercing’ sustained synth’ tone (1) that initially appears just off centre to the right but seems to move further outwards in this direction as a second, an additional synth’ pad (2), emerges centrally in the mix. The high-pitched and sustained synth sound (1) could be considered as both an episodic determinant for this section and a sonic anaphone of a whistle. It appears three times and in this context may be interpreted as a signal, calling the attention of a number of people. The tension momentarily subsides as we hear the line ‘and any day now it won’t be long’ with the word ‘long’ emphasised in a perceived southern accent under which all instruments are *tacet*. In his analysis of over two thousand blues songs recorded before 1939 Michael Taft (2013) identified the phrase ‘it won’t be long’ as one of the most frequently employed lyrical formulas of ‘anxiety’ in blues performance suggesting that the use of the phrase ‘emphasizes an impending change and disruption to the status quo: time is short, and the

threat of something new and perhaps unpleasant is just around the corner’ (Taft, 2013, p. 195). The break and temporary contrast in texture only punctuates the autosonic samples of human screams and cries that occupy the last bar of this section and continue into the next, contributing to the aforementioned unpleasant change suggested in the lyrical line.

#### 02:24-02:56 (Chorus)

The signal noise and intermittent static suggest equipment malfunction, and high-pitched ‘screeching’ effects appear to mimic the human screams heard throughout this section and so may be regarded as sonic and vocal anaphones respectively. These sound sources may also be considered singularly as a social anaphone in that we may perceive ‘the relationship of an individual to an environment’ (Tagg, 2012, p. 514). The culmination of people screaming and crying, electronic noise, and lead vocal screams (02:33, 02:41, 02:47) creates a sense of panic, horror and agony that is only intensified with the resumption of the gospel choir sample at bars 5 and 13 adding complexity to what is unfolding through the inherent cultural links to a sacred tradition. During this climax of the song, it is possible to perceive a very grim mental picture of an inferno suggested in the randomness of noise analogous to the unpredictability of fire and subsequent catastrophic effects. The foregrounded position of the lead vocal screams in the mix suggests that this person may be standing outside of and/or in front of the inferno as perhaps the instigator and so reaping revenge on the oppressors.

#### 02:56-03:12 Verse 4

This section begins with a break as an episodic marker, within which all instruments except the synth’ bass and vocal are *tacet*. The sonic space provided to the vocal, in particular, provides a sense of directness towards the listener and words and phrases such as ‘hand...ties...noose’ and ‘the thirteen loops’ stand out, the latter of which is punctuated by what is perceived as an autosonic sample of the descending pitch of a police siren heard in the right channel.

The remainder of this section is a reiteration of the previous verse, as the drums and hi-hat patterns re-enter the song. One noticeable difference is that the gradually re-emerging synth' pad appears louder or more apparent in the mix than in previous verse sections.

#### 03:12-03:28 Chorus

In this section, attention is once again drawn to the sonic anaphora of the cracking of a whip through the velocity with which the snare drum appears to be struck and the large amounts of echo applied to the vocal part that reiterates and emphasises the main lyrical line with 'oh yes it is, yes it is' (03:23).

#### 03:28-03:44 Coda

The swelling synth' part (03:28) is more prominent and sustained this time and does not disappear noticeably in the middle of the stereo image when heard in context with the gospel sample. The track ends abruptly with no reverberation tails into silence perhaps ominously suggesting that what has been 'coming' is here and that the past has finally caught up with the future.

### **Lyrical Analysis**

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The first line of the opening verse illustrates the initial situation in which there is absention implied through the adverb 'never', the past-tense inflected 'saw' and the noun 'face'. This also suggests that the narrator from a first-person perspective is speaking to a person or a group of people who were not known personally. Despite this, the subject of the narrator's mental process is/are 'there' and 'waiting at the right hand'

suggesting the possibility of interdiction in assisting the narrator in fulfilment of an unspecified aim.

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The villain is identified in the next section as ‘Satan’ who ‘laughs’ suggesting trickery and illustrating both the personification of this entity and to a lesser degree the position of power such entity holds. Within this, there is also an implication of reconnaissance as the entity appears to have an awareness of the narrator and/or the narrator’s thoughts. This is immediately mediated through the narrator’s assertion ‘but I can swear I hear all’ suggesting either the transparency of deceit or the unveiling of such. Counteraction is implied in ‘the saints on their way down’ which at this point also confirms that the subject of the narrator’s thoughts in the opening lines is, in fact, a collective who have passed on. Connotations of heaven and the holy arise through the use of the word ‘saints’ which also sets up the good/evil dichotomy. Representations of action here remain mostly mentally situated, although there is a behavioural aspect to the saints as they descend from heaven.

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In this verse, there is a sudden change of context from the metaphysical to a material reality indicated in the use of the everyday nouns ‘shirts’ and ‘lights’. The first two lines indicate the depersonalisation of law enforcement in their objectivated and collectivised status as shirts. The adjectives ‘brown’ and ‘black’ depict common colours worn by US

law officials, and their patrol vehicles are represented in the ‘flashing lights’. This collective is placed in opposition to the narrator through the use of the word ‘they’ in the contraction ‘they’re’. Further trickery is invoked through the portrayal of the shirts ‘hiding in different colours in the dead of night’ whilst both a suggestion of power in ‘they’re running Waller County’ and the insinuation that ‘four thousand died’ at the hands of the powerful, collectively depicts villainy. It is the provision of precise real-world locations such as ‘Waller County, Texas’ and ‘Jackson, Mississippi’ that enable steps towards offering an interpretation of the oppositional forces at work. Lacasse (2018) defines the practice of cophonography as designating ‘the copresence of intramodal or extramodal texts sharing a common encompassing space’ (Lacasse, 2018, p. 36), and it is through a cophonographic reference in an intramodal text that the meaning of this section becomes clear. In the official video (Matador Records, 2017) for the song, a bold upper case image of text appears (00:59) stating that ‘more than 4,200 people in Texas have died in custody in the past decade’. The figure can be verified through the *Custodial Death Report* (Paxton, 2016), an online database launched by the state attorney general’s office in 2016 and the following list illustrates the total number of entries recorded from 2005 to the present (27 April 2018):

2005 -	294
2006 -	335
2007 -	370
2008 -	345
2009 -	322
2010 -	312
2011 -	308
2012 -	351
2013 -	675
2014 -	624
2015 -	703
2016 -	636
2017 -	717
2018 -	239

*Figure 9: Number of custodial deaths in the state of Texas from 2005 to 2018*

In the paratext beneath the video for the song are various weblinks to the sites of the *Southern Poverty Law Center*, *National Police Accountability Project*, and *Black Lives Matter* and a quote from the lyricist and group frontman James Franklin Fisher which reads ‘a recurring theme in our music is the idea of injustice and the bitter understanding that obtaining justice in this world is all but impossible-particularly for black and brown people’ (Matador Records, 2017). This sense of impossibility is clearly depicted within the song *Cleveland*. The hopelessness in achieving justice is alluded to in the final line of the verse where ‘they don’t have to hide’ invokes connotations of not only the openly racist and heavy-handed police practices of the present but also secondary connotations of Mississippi’s sonorous historical past.

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Despite the threat of counteraction asserted in the chorus section through ‘but innocence oh is alive’ and ‘it’s coming back’, the use of the phrase ‘one day’ suggests doubt and the feeling of the unknown emphasising the narrator’s relatively powerless position. The narrator advocates the collective subject of the first line through the use of the word ‘innocence’ and in its mass form could also allude to an unspecified number of people.

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The following verse reflects the behavioural passivity of the narrator adopted in the preceding sections and with this repetition, an ongoing struggle is implied. The politicisation of ‘evil’ is explicitly portrayed through the subsequent use of the word ‘power’ with a direct reference to a particular time period, the year 1963 in which

American Baptist minister and civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr was arrested in Birmingham, Alabama for protesting against the treatment of black citizens and a few months later famously delivered his 'I have a dream' speech in Washington D.C. to approximately a quarter of a million people (for discussion of the Civil Rights movement and music, see chapter two, pp. 91-94). The use of the word 'hang' has the potential for dual meaning here: the first an informal reference to 'hanging out' where someone may spend a large amount of time relaxing in a particular space, and second it alludes to being 'hanged' as in killed through the suspension of a rope tied around the neck. References to the Ku Klux Klan are made through both the objectivated and collectivised 'whitest sheets' and in the combustible oil 'kerosene' utilised by the KKK to soak wooden crosses prior to their inflammation. These references refer to symbols that most succinctly afford a perception of the group strongly opposed to racial integration. It is with reference to two new locations within which the struggle takes place namely 'Homewood, Alabama' and 'Montgomery County, Maryland' that the past is connected with the present in this verse, something that will be addressed later.

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In this iteration of the chorus we hear the bravely delivered but uncertain statement, 'I don't think you're gonna get away now' noting the use of the word 'think' further suggesting the comparatively powerless position in that participant action is primarily articulated through mental rather than material process. Despite this, there is great enthusiasm for the cause as suggested by the 'zeal' with which the narrator 'can hear them screaming' referring to a collective group of people expressing extreme emotion, that leads to the bridge.

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It is within this section of the song that the anonymous victims become personalised through mention of individual names, whilst a sense of the collective is retained through the structure, that is to say, all individuals are named within the same section of the song. Kindra Chapman hanged herself using white bed sheets in a Homewood, Alabama jail cell in 2015 after her arrest for allegedly stealing a mobile phone (Blow, 2015). This incident is clearly referenced in the line of the previous verse ‘they hang in Homewood, Alabama with the whitest sheets’. Andre Jones committed suicide in Simpson County Jail not far from Jackson, Mississippi in 1992 (Applebome, 1993). Lennon Lacy was found hanged in the middle of a trailer park in Bladenboro, North Carolina in 2014 (Pilkington, 2016). The body of Sandra Bland was discovered in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas 2015 (Blow, 2015). Roosevelt Pernell died during incarceration at Lowndes County Sheriff’s Office, Columbus, Mississippi in 2007 (Mamrack, 2010). Also referenced in the line ‘and in Montgomery County, Maryland from a sapling tree’ is the case of Keith Warren whose body was located in Silver Springs suspended from a tree in 1986 (Thomas-Lester, 2012). Lastly, Alfred Wright’s family discovered his body in Sabine County, Texas in 2013 (Levitt & Feyerick, 2014). Apart from the obvious similarities, the circumstances surrounding the deaths of each individual, as provided by the local authorities, has in each case been questioned at various points in time by family members, friends, and social movement groups. In seeking the truth as to the actual circumstances of death, multiple protests and the filing of lawsuits against law enforcement officials have also been enacted. After each line, delivered by the narrator in this section, a collective group emphatically shouts ‘we’re coming back’ in response.

On one level, the ‘we’ may refer to those groups who have challenged the official verdicts presented in the aforementioned cases but on another level may also include all people who have suffered racial intolerance in any form nationally and internationally. Therefore this polyvalent characteristic of the line as presented in this context affords a multiplicity of meaning to a potentially large number of people across the globe. The bridge ends with the more assertive phrase ‘it won’t be long’ but is still tempered by the uncertainty of ‘any day now’ that precedes the caesura.

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In the following section, nouns such as ‘hand’, ‘gavel’ and ‘noose’ stand out in the space provided by the break in the accompaniment. The first two lines indicate both trickery and villainy through the dual use of the objectivated ‘hand’, in one instance representing justice but in another tying ‘the noose’ making reference to both structural racism in the present and the lynching practice of the past. The subsequent lines make reference to a particular moment in history through the term ‘thirteen loops’ which connotes the lynching of Michael Donald by KKK members in Mobile, Alabama in 1981, noted as being the last lynching to have taken place on American soil. The term itself refers to the number of loops found wrapped around the coil of the noose used to commit the murder (Hollars, 2011, p. 139). The more material action of ‘that hand is gonna fold’ highlights a continuing struggle in promising ‘the day is coming soon’, whilst the use of the term ‘dust’ refers to the historical nature and longevity of injustice. The use of the word ‘resurrect’ affords both a reference to the bringing back to life of the deceased perhaps through the reopening of case files and also the gravity and enormity of the challenge in

actually bringing someone back from the dead, in the course of uncovering the buried ‘truth’.

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With the final chorus, there is a continued assertiveness shown by the narrator ‘oh, yes it is, yes it is’ but victory is never achieved as the perpetual nature of villainy remains unaltered and in power.

## Interphonography

The autsonic gospel sample heard in *Cleveland* is taken from the song *Peace Be Still* recorded live in Newark, New Jersey in 1963 by modern gospel pioneer James Cleveland and The Angelic Gospel Choir and released the following year on the album of the same name (Cleveland, 1964) by Savoy Records. This hypophonogram was performed in the month after the aforementioned March on Washington and is based on passages from the Gospel of Mark such as ‘and he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm’ (Mark 4: 39). Opaque mediation is detected in both the fifty-three-year difference in production values between the Algiers recording and the hypophonogram, and the affordance of the accompanying instruments that exist within the gospel recording such as piano, organ, and drums. The sample selected includes the words ‘the ship’ (02:54-02:56) and is also heard in the live recording (04:28).

	<u>Beat</u>			
<u>Bar</u>	1	2	3	4
1	ship_____			

Figure 10: Loop [A] sample, sample position, and length

In *Cleveland*, the sample is arranged into two loops heard at different parts of the song. Loop [A], as seen in figure 10, can be heard in the introduction and each chorus from bar 5 consisting simply of the word ‘ship’ and is sequenced to begin at the start of each bar.

	<u>Beat</u>			
<u>Bar</u>	1	2	3	4
1			the	_____
2	ship	_____		

Figure 11: Loop [B] sample, sample position, and length

Loop [B], as seen in figure 11 and heard four times in most verse sections is comprised of the words ‘the ship’ which begins on beat three and lasts the duration of the following bar. The noun sampled denotes a large boat used for the transportation of goods and/or people and is utilised in the hypophonogram in this way with reference to the stormy conditions faced by Jesus and his disciples in the lines ‘no water can swallow the ship where lies, the Master of ocean and earth and skies’ as Jesus commands that the ocean is calm. In the context of the narrative in *Cleveland*, the story portrayed in the hypophonographic reference reflects the adverse conditions faced by the narrator and the collective, albeit in a different way, and can be interpreted as to emphasise the perceived scale of the challenge, that is to say, one of biblical proportions.

Gospel music is noted to have played an influential role in the early musical development of Fisher (Turner, 2015). In addition to a semi-shouted approach, full of pitch inflections and expressive interjections, Fisher also shares the distinctly rough vocal timbre of James Cleveland, resulting from strained vocal cords, and admits that the influence of punk enabled him to come to terms with the limitations and imperfections of his own voice (Coscarelli, 2015). These parallels in voice and style may also point to a kind of tribute to the pioneer of gospel, which of course may also be witnessed in the title of the song.

## Paraphonography & Metaphonography

The song title not only alludes to the surname of James Cleveland whose version of *Peace Be Still* is digitally sampled in the song, but also to the city in Ohio where two police officers shot dead twelve-year-old Tamir Rice in 2014 (see, pp. 205-206). The shooting of this African-American boy followed a string of similar incidents involving the police and black victims including Michael Brown who was shot in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner who was strangled to death in Staten Island, New York City. These events contributed to the mobilisation of the Black Lives Matter movement, now known as the Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN), whose mission is ‘to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes’ (Union Labor, 2018). The connections between this social movement group and the song *Cleveland* are made explicit in the paratext to the video of the song, containing a weblink to the BLMGN website, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. The song is included on the 2017 album release titled *The Underside of Power* (Algiers, 2017) featuring other tracks such as *Walk Like a Panther*, *Cry of the Martyrs*, and *Death March*. The album title can be interpreted to summarise the overarching theme of the contents, which collectively refer to both the discriminatory practices enacted towards, and the continuous subjugation of, minority social groups who as a consequence are unable to exert influence on their own destiny.

The group’s name Algiers refers to the capital and largest city in Algeria and by connotation anti-colonial struggle, as in the Algerian War (1954-1962) at the end of which independence from France, which had colonised Algeria in 1830, was achieved. As this chapter demonstrates, the source(s) of conflict and discussions of difference are often manifested in art forms such as music (see pp. 21-27 and also Brinner, 2009; Gilroy, 2005; and Montero-Diaz, 2016), and in an interview for an online British popular music magazine (Turner, 2015), group member Ryan Mahan suggests the name Algiers both refers ‘to a contested space, where violence, racism, resistance and religion commingle’ and also ‘to a dissipated notion of common cause, a truly global consciousness in opposition to the elite cosmopolitanism we see today’. In the latter

statement, Mahan is pointing to the significance of Algiers to the Black Panther Party wherein the leader Eldridge Cleaver and his wife Kathleen spent some time in exile from the end of the 1960s establishing an international office there until its closure in 1972. In the same interview, there is also reference to more recent events as Algiers has been the target of a number of terrorist attacks linked to the Islamic extremist group Al-Qaida since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **The Intended Message**

From the responses offered by group members in media interviews and press releases published online for various popular music culture magazines, it is possible to offer an interpretation of the intended artistic message. This may be categorised into extrinsic and intrinsic factors of the song that are entwined in the coding of the message, in other words, they refer to sociocultural aspects and signs that influence the contents of a recorded song (extrinsic) and both the musical and lyrical aspects that exist within the recording (intrinsic).

I wanted the song to sound like the Final Judgment in the Bible, wherein the wicked are judged and condemned by the righteous with all the “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” of the damned when justice is finally realized. This translates in the “solo” section of the song. It consists of various recordings of people inconsolably crying and weeping while the guitar and lead vocal mirror their contortions. If you’ve ever witnessed something like that in real life, [*sic*] sound of a person’s sorrow is equal parts frightening and musical (Franklin James Fisher cited in Roberts, 2017).

In this statement, the group’s singer and lyricist Franklin James Fisher clearly outlines the themes of vengeance and retribution whilst also referring to the intrinsic sonic characteristics of a particular section in the narrative of the song. There is clear intention to invoke biblical connotations and this is expressed in both the words and the delivery of

such, whilst the accompanying music emphasises this through repeated interphonographic references to gospel music.

With “Cleveland,” for example, that was a bit of a detour in terms of process and approach to lyric writing, because it came from a very personal place. I have lost a lot of friends through random acts of violence and state sanctioned violence, and I referred to them in the first record, but not by name because I didn’t really want to go there. But when you’re reading stories in the news of people who fell victim to the same sorts of atrocities, and that resonates with you on a personal level, it can almost bring focus and attention to the larger picture (Franklin James Fisher cited in Leigh, 2017).

The extrinsic factor here is the feeling of loss experienced by the lyricist, which is repeatedly brought into sharp relief with the publication of stories of victims who also lost their lives at the hands of violent aggressors. The implied sense is that as an African American, Fisher has a personal connection with the victims named in the bridge of the song through his past experience. Most notable is the powerful effect of the media that in this case appears to have triggered an act or acts of remembrance (see discussions of memory and the media, pp. 30-31; cultural memory, pp. 48-49 and chapter two, pp. 96-101).

In my spare time, I read a lot of blogs and listen to podcasts about unexplained deaths and missing persons - especially when it concerns corruption within state and legal institutions. The cases of some of the individuals mentioned in the song - Kindra Chapman, Sandra Bland, Andre Jones, Keith Warren, Alfred Wright - are so obviously criminal but they’ve been all overlooked and forgotten except by their loved ones who are still fighting for answers and justice. People need to know about these cases. They’re definitely not isolated and it’s a phenomenon which has been ongoing since the founding of this country (Franklin James Fisher cited in Boilen, 2017).

In a separate interview, the power of the media and in particular the World Wide Web ('blogs' and 'podcasts') are influential in the development of the intended message of the song. Raising awareness of racial discrimination and violence through the precise identification of victims and the mobilisation of social groups into action through strong rhetoric ('criminal' and 'fighting') are the primary aims of the message coded within both the lyrics and 'violence' of the accompaniment (for historical links between racial discrimination and music, see chapter two pp. 87-94, 98-99). The overall manifestation of these themes is articulated with personal feeling and a great deal of emotion providing a sincere aesthetic quality.

This analysis has demonstrated how the traditions of the past may be reimagined by musicians and manifested in contemporary popular music forms. In providing an interpretation of the structural aspects of the music and its articulation that gives rise to potential meaning, it is possible to see the extent to which there is concordance with the narrative expressed within the lyrics, as in for example the initial situation and the conveyance of pain both emphasised through vocal straining, screaming, and distortion. As the past is brought into the present the music builds in momentum through increased rhythmic density in verse sections whilst an increasing sense of movement reflects the rallying of a collective. A sense of helplessness is perceived through the disorientation and confusion articulated in the production effects applied to the vocal track that also connotes a recollection of the past. As the anonymous become personalised there is a contrast in the musical structure, whilst the collective is emphasised using traditional call and response aesthetics. Themes of panic and horror are reflected in the social and sonic anaphones that mimic human screams whilst sacred traditions are invoked through transphonographic practices. Through this largely interpretative analysis, it is clear the music incorporates elements of narrative discourse that support the lyrical narrative, and this decoding of the message in *Cleveland* closely reflects the intended message of the artist. However, it is only after such an analytical process that the extent of the meaning could be revealed more fully and these aspects of codal competence and codal interference in a hermeneutic analysis of interpretation are discussed in the next chapter. Experiential access to an 'adequate response' in the decoding of the message at the receiver end of the transmission is both complicated and enabled through mediated forms

of communication. In other words, and as demonstrated in the song analysis of this chapter, the blues is encoded or reimagined by the artist in a new context and the message must be decoded and reinterpreted through a shared set of sociocultural norms which may be accessed at both ends of the transmitter - channel - receiver model through global forms of communication such as mediated online materials for example. Therefore, transracial engagement with the blues as a form of cultural expression is possible to the extent that patterns of social behaviour may be learned through the storing of signs common to both transmitter and receiver. What may then be considered as the hybridisation of a cultural form is increasingly homogenised through globalised processes. However, the issue of a listener's comprehension of the blues as reimagined in a contemporary context is brought to the fore in such processes. *Cleveland* follows a standard verse/chorus framework and does not conform to a twelve-bar form with the I-IV-V harmonic progression. Texturally, electronic instruments provide the bulk of the accompanying music, there are no pianos or harmonicas, and only minimal use of guitar apparent in the middle of the song, eschewing the individualism of the archetypal blues or blues-rock guitar solo through the experimental use of pitch-altering effects that reflect the randomness and agony conveyed within that section. There are no deviations in adherence to tempo, and sequencing and sampling techniques are performed with digital precision. Despite the use of occasional blue notes, a loose approach to vocal intonation at times illustrating the fact that autotune has not been used, and the dotted rhythms that constitute the electronic drum patterns, the overall formal characteristics of the song do not conform to the stereotypical blues music style definition (p. 40). The answer to this issue posed here will be addressed through an analysis of listener responses in the UK and online to both *Cleveland* and other analysis objects in the next chapter.

# **Chapter 7: Reimagining Perceptions of the Blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

## **Introduction**

The ways in which individuals listen to, perceive, and respond to music depends on a wide range of factors including the sociocultural experience of the listener, the situations and circumstances within which attention is given to sound including the cultural context, and how the music has been, is, or is to be, used. In this chapter, contemporary perceptions of the blues will be discussed in relation to: the results of live listening exercises or LLEs (see pp. 71-76); discourses surrounding the perception of popular music artefacts online and in print; quantitative data including commercial sales figures; music industry processes and mass cultural theory; and interviews with representatives of the music industry including blues music curators. The aim of this work is to analyse how the blues is interpreted in a postmodern context, in which hybridity is emphasised and categories of identity, spaces, and times are blurred, and shed light on potentially influential factors that may impact on such interpretations. Additionally, the chapter further explores how the boundaries of blues music as a style are demarcated in online discourse of blues-based artefacts. In doing so, it is demonstrated how the blues is being both reimagined by contemporary popular music producers and declassified in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by listeners and their engagement with popular music objects, communication technologies, and associated discourses, and provides a measure of the extent to which the traditions of the past are manifest in the present.

The response of participants in the LLEs (Appendix 8) provides the basis for much of the discussion in this chapter. The methodological approach involved in the structure of the questions (Appendix 3), the participant sample, and the context of listening is detailed in the LLE section of the methodology chapter (pp. 71-76). The analysis of qualitative data drawn from the participant responses is performed utilising stylistic labels as used by online media libraries and vendors, in addition to comparative data extracted from online consumer reviews, whilst the section concerning definitions of the blues includes data

analysed using descriptive coding. Quantitative data from each LLE is compared with transatlantic facts and sales figures generated by The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), The British Phonograph Industry (BPI), and Billboard sales as published by the Nielsen Corporation.

The chapter begins with an analysis of listener responses to the Algiers song *Cleveland* with emphasis placed on interpretations of style and meaning and how responses relating to the former correlate with industry categorisations. The subsequent section illustrates how contemporary performers reimagine the blues in four other analysis objects and how participants respond to such with reference to content and their own perceptions of blues. These songs are selected for their potentiality in pushing the boundaries of what has in the past been perceived as blues music and it is this potentiality that is explored in each LLE in addition to each listener's understanding of the stylistic labels used in music categorisation.

The method for selecting the four audio artefacts analysed in this chapter is based on either a titular, thematic, or stylistic reference strongly linked to the traditions of the blues. *Freedom* by Beyoncé is selected for its thematic reference to both diaspora and social protest in addition to musicological features that are expressive of blues music characteristics defined in the past. The artist in this selection is a hugely successful and popular solo performer with a global status and therefore the inclusion of *Freedom* in the LLE also aims to provide some measure of the impact of such on perceptions of music style, in addition to how perceptions of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may affect a listener's response to historically and culturally significant thematic material. Royal Blood's *I Only Lie When I Love You* is selected for primarily musicological factors such as the instrumentation, melodic and harmonic features that indicate spatio-motor thinking in performance (Baily & Driver, 1992), and a lyrical theme of love, all connected to the traditions of the past. The group and their material have also been loosely connected to the blues in market media practices through stylistic labelling, although not strictly labelled as blues, and so this relationship is compared with the stylistic responses in the LLEs, in part to illustrate how stylistic categorisation in the music industry may impact on a listener's perception of the blues in a contemporary context. Digitally sampled

material of the past contextualised in an electronic music framework is also explored in its impact on contemporary perceptions of blues with the selection of Mixendorp's *Mad Man Blues*. Apart from the titular reference, this particular example has also been categorised as 'electro-blues' and may, therefore, be thought of as almost explicitly hybrid. Finally, *Alabama* by the group NuBlues is selected for its paratextual reference to blues and for its derivation and transformation of musical and lyrical materials of an existing blues-marketed song released in the past. In this way, such an example may be referred to as a hyperphonogram and incidentally, the majority of other recordings referenced in this chapter also arise from methods of intertextual analysis (see pp. 59-60). Collectively, the recordings selected for analysis here both exemplify and are the product of globalised processes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in selecting these artefacts, the overarching aim is to provide some measure or illustrate the distance travelled in the development and reimagining of culturally significant materials of the past, whilst almost simultaneously acknowledging the constraints of the past and advancing how the blues may be more accurately conceptualised in the present.

The characteristics that define the blues in the minds of the listening cohort are analysed in the subsequent section and the results of which are compared with those of other ethnographic studies. The hugely popular video-hosting site YouTube and its potential as a 'site of experience' will also be examined, and as the most popular listening format amongst young music consumers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, streaming and associated music sales figures will provide the concluding sections to this work.

### **Response to *Cleveland***

The hypothesis that listeners would not perceive *Cleveland* as stylistically representative of the blues was supported by the results of responses to the question 'What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?' to which eleven respondents offered a range of responses as seen in the following figure:

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Style(s)</b>	<b>Tally</b>
1	rock, soul, gospel, electronic, indie	5
2	soul, pop, electronic	3
3	hip-hop, techno, grunge	3
4	Tribal	1
5	electronic, soul	2
6	electronic, industrial	2
7	heavy metal, scream, techno	3
8	electric rock	1
9	soul, electronic music	2
10	electronic, alternative, experimental, trap	4
11	rock, pop	2

*Figure 12: Stylistic labels in listener responses to Cleveland*

The table above is a summary of listener responses to question three in the LLE (Appendix 8.4) illustrating the number of styles each respondent provided with a simple tally of how many styles were offered per respondent in this LLE and a number of observations can be made from the responses offered in the listening exercises. The first is that no participant referred to the blues when describing the style of the song. The second is that the most common response was ‘electronic’ with six references. ‘Soul’ is recorded on four occasions but only in conjunction with the electronic label. Finally, over 80% (nine) of the respondents offered more than one stylistic response in providing their answer.

In terms of interpreting the contents of the song (question two, Appendix 8.4), the participants generally struggled to decode the intended message of the transmitter with only one respondent offering a partially adequate response, suggesting ‘it’s a story, I cannot make out the lyrics completely but the emotion put into them resembles call and response, like talking to a rallying group, a collective. This seems to be a dark song of rallying power’ (participant 3, 22 March 2018). Whilst this respondent failed to decode any specific details or themes in the song, two other listeners also pointed directly and indirectly to indecipherable lyrics in their respective responses as to why they either

could not offer an interpretation [9] or felt they could not offer an adequate response [5]. Another respondent [2] did not offer any interpretative response at all.

As indicated previously, processes of coding and decoding are culturally situated and both Middleton (1990, pp. 173, 175) and perhaps less strongly Tagg (2012, p. 179) highlight the *importance* of competence in that the ‘maximum signification effect’ can only occur when music coded on *all* levels is interpreted with *full* competence. The levels in this context refer to a number of ‘general codes’ defined by Middleton (1990, p. 174) as *langue* (in this case, referring to the conventions of the signifying system that is Western musical code), norms, sub-norms, dialects, styles, genres, sub-codes, idiolects and works and performances. These levels of code can be applied to *Cleveland* in the following way:

- a. *norms*. Mainstream conventions governing the post-2000 period of popular music.
- b. *sub-norms*. The conventions associated with a particular era, in this case, the popular music of the 2010s including the increasing use of both traditional and electronic instruments in indie rock and ‘vowel-breaking’ techniques of popular music performers such as Lorde and Shawn Mendes.
- c. *dialects*. Anglo-American, African-American.
- d. *styles*. Rock.
- e. *genre*. Album.
- f. *sub-codes*. ‘Punk blues’, alternative (indie) rock.
- g. *idiolect*. The stylistic traits of Franklin James Fisher.
- h. *works and performances*. Cleveland.

Further levels of code can be subsumed into the above and will be discussed later in this chapter. Achievement of total unity between a sign as semiotically intended and as interpreted is unrealistic due to the fact that no two people interpret the same object in exactly the same manner and in *Composing Electronic Music: A New Aesthetic* (Roads, 2015) Curtis Roads concludes his chapter on sonic narrative by suggesting that ‘imperfect communication, in which the message perceived by each listener is unique, is part of the fascination of music’ (Roads, 2015, p. 336). Nevertheless, as a focal point of this chapter

it is necessary to consider the ways in which factors may impact on the decoding of a message in a popular music context. Tagg (2012) provides one way of thinking about these obstacles, and the relation to a shared store of signs within sociocultural norms that would ideally be common to both transmitter and receiver, in terms of ‘codal incompetence’ and ‘codal interference’ (Tagg, 2012, p. 178). Codal incompetence at the end of the receiver simply means that the transmitter and receiver do not share the same store of signs resulting in a coded message that has not been successfully decoded ‘in terms of the music’s original cultural setting, functions and intentions’ (Tagg, 2012, p. 179). Codal interference on the other hand refers to a situation within which both transmitter and receiver have a shared set of signs in common but do not share a set of sociocultural norms and so the decoding is ‘obstructed’ by factors including the receiver’s worldview, social and moral values, and the ideological recontextualisation of the music (Tagg, 2012, p. 182).

In the results presented above codal interference is evident in the responses of participant [7] who was deterred, firstly by the perceived sonic characteristics of the song, from offering any interpretation of meaning - ‘I’m not too sure, It’s [*sic*] a bit heavy handed for me to listen to’ and in a separate question, listening preferences were seemingly an obstacle to providing an interpretation of blues music - ‘not sure, I don’t really listen to blues’. The response to meaning is complicated by the same respondent’s answer to his/her own listening preferences that included ‘dubstep’ and ‘metal’ notable for their noise elements, and further still by the respondent’s response to the categorisation of *Cleveland* as ‘heavy metal, scream, techno (I’m not sure)’ (participant 7, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2018). A tentative summary of the codal interference, in this case, points to a matter of taste and personal preference, although the listening situation may also be an impacting factor here on the decoding of meaning. None of the participants had heard the song prior to the LLE and so codal interference in the recontextualisation of the music is not a factor in this respect, but the detection of a gospel choir in a contemporary ‘electronic’ style as in the response of participant [9] for example, may have impacted on the perceived interpretation of meaning through the juxtaposition of the sacred and secular that would largely depend on the personal values of the respondent.

When considered in conjunction with the responses of participants to the characteristics of the song, meaning was mostly judged to have resided in the text and the expressive elements of the lead vocal part. This is not surprising considering both the conventions that surround the production of popular music objects such as the prominently positioned vocal track in an audio mix, and the privileged status song lyrics occupy in the discourse of popular music amongst fans and critics. Nine participants noted the vocal as a ‘voice’ within the track, and anthropological references in the interpretation of meaning underpinned the responses of five participants [1], [3], [4], [9], and [10]. Some responses focused on either emotive qualities, as in the case of [3], [5], [6] and [8], or made slightly ambiguous responses that could refer to either the impact of the words, vocal expression or the meaning within the music itself as by respondents [5], [7], and [11]. There is a degree of intersubjectivity in the overall impression of the song in relation to meaning as the words ‘powerful’, ‘distorted’, ‘heavy’, and ‘angry’ are most frequently used in the descriptive responses of participants. However, with the exception of one participant [3], the intended meaning was largely only decoded at the level of specificity these terms suggest. The degree of technological mediation in the production of the song and the manner in which the song has been mixed and produced, combined with the expressive nature of the vocal approach could largely be the cause of a type of codal incompetence in this case, wherein a reimagining of the blues has largely been undetected.

Whilst there was a high level of codal incompetence in the perceived meaning of the song, most of the stylistic responses were congruent with categorisations of the music in online media libraries, music vendors, and music guides.

	AllMusic.com	Amazon.co.uk	Amazon.com	Apple Music	Discogs
Genre	pop/rock			alternative	electronic, rock, funk/soul, blues
Style	'punk blues' / indie rock / alternative (indie) rock				industrial, gospel, post- punk
Digital		indie & alternative	alternative rock		
CDs / Vinyl		alternative rock / pop	alternative rock / pop / rock		

Figure 13: 'The Underside of Power' album classification

Figure 13 shows the classification of *The Underside of Power* (as of 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018), and where *Cleveland* is available for download or streaming as an individual track, such as on the site of the vendor Amazon, the song is classified with the same label under the 'digital' heading. Whilst each respondent was asked to suggest 'stylistic' references of categorisation, for the purposes of this task each response is tallied against both style and genre classifications, as the distinctions between genre and style both within and outside of academia are constantly contested and complicated by factors relating to codal incompetence and the workings of the music industry. Perhaps unsurprisingly, with the most number of labels, the classifications used by Discogs (Discogs, 2017) were most frequently used with fifteen matches with listeners in the study. The electronic tag contributed to six of these and Discogs is notable in that it was the only website to feature this label on the group's music. The application of 'indie' distinguished the UK Amazon (Amazon.co.uk, 2017) website (seven matches) from the US (Amazon.com, 2017) version (five matches) both of which categorised the music as 'alternative rock'. Both

labels are also present on the AllMusic (AllMusic, 2017) website with five matching references in the LLE, and only one respondent used the label ‘alternative’, as seen on the Apple Music (Apple Music, 2017) site. Overall, the stylistic responses provided by participants are consistent with those utilised in the practices of online music sites presented here and this congruence may be partly explained by the listening habits of the group as shown in the following figure:



*Figure 14: Formats and platforms in music consumption of participants (%)*

The use of online digital services for music streaming, and to a lesser extent the downloading of audio files, is reflective of current trends (IFPI, 2017a) in the music industry concerned with listening habits following a pattern of decreasing sales of physical formats and an increase in digital formats, despite an upturn in sales of the vinyl format that has experienced something of a revival. It follows that listeners most familiar with non-physical platforms for listening will be more versed in the terminology used online to describe cultural artefacts and associated discourse involved in the consumption of popular music. As a specialist site for vinyl format sales, Discogs is unique in that it is based on crowdsourcing information so the inclusion of blues as a genre label to the Algiers recording is notable in that clearly those contributors and users in the Discogs community have agreed on this label. Users can submit style requests in which in order to be considered, an ‘internationally accepted’ style name, not including ‘micro-styles’, must be included along with any alternative names, a genre label, stylistic description, three audio examples, associated styles, and three ‘trustworthy external citations’ of the label (Kinloch, 2010). Whilst the process is obviously more arduous than simply sending

a request with a stylistic title, and the final decision is made by a member of staff, there are plenty of examples of accepted style requests available to view on the style request page. This process emphasises a democratic approach to the demarcation of stylistic and generic boundaries of music wherein any member of society can, in theory, contribute to the ever-changing nature of music classification, albeit with a small amount of effort. In addition to the generic label of blues, the stylistic label of gospel is also interesting; although *Cleveland* features clear call and response elements, the interphonographic and autsonic context of the collective voices heard signals opaque mediation, suggesting that the stylistic response of both consumers on Discogs and respondent [1] in the study was either unaffected by such mediation or less likely, did not perceive the gospel choir as being digitally sampled. Both Discogs and AllMusic.com refer to ‘punk’ in their stylistic labelling, with the latter site using ‘punk blues’, but as noted, and in accordance with Apple Music and Amazon, none of the seven respondents offered blues as a stylistic label.

The references to soul in a number of responses [1], [2], [5] and [9] with regards to music style could perhaps be related to the *meaning* of the song more closely than the majority of responses offered in relation to that question. Historically, soul music is closely aligned chronologically and culturally to the Civil Rights movement and an increasing political consciousness may be perceived in associated songs such as *What’s Going On* by Marvin Gaye, a track widely revered as ‘the artistic benchmark of protest music’ (Neal, 2014, p. 9). Whilst the emergence of soul music in the late 1950s was marketed by record labels to both black and white consumers, soul became connotative of racialised discourse within which it ‘was not so much a way for Americans to talk about the music they were making and consuming as it was a way for them to talk about themselves’ and ‘instead of music being something people did, music became something people *were*’ (Hamilton, 2016, p. 212, italics in original). The conflation of racial and musical ideologies in the discourse of soul has since remained and are evidenced in the use of the adjective ‘soulful’ defined as ‘expressing deep and often sorrowful feeling’ (Waite, 2012), a term also used in the description of *Cleveland* (for discussions of the racialisation of music, see pp. 21-27, for music and the Civil Rights movement, see chapter two, pp. 91-94). It is suggested that the stylistic label of soul is utilised by the participants in this

study to refer to the expressive vocal approach of the lead singer. This is supported by the fact that these respondents were largely focused on deciphering meaning through the words, as evidenced in their responses (Appendix 8.4), and in being largely unable to do so, their attention is focused on the vocal articulation *of* the words. The combination of soul with electronica and the infusion of a soulful approach into the use of electronic music styles is a common 21<sup>st</sup>-century approach within which the oppositional relationship of technology and nature is contested and dismantled within the environment of popular music song production (for example, see Marsh & West, 2003) and dichotomies such as nature/technology and past/future also brings connotations with Afrofuturism (see, pp. 14-16). These binary connections are perceived by the respondents, as witnessed in the use of both the electronic and soul labels when listening to the Algiers' song.

The majority of respondents made reference to a perceived hybridity in the music, evidenced in the number of stylistic responses offered, and respondent [3] refers directly to the 'experimental' features of a 'hip-hop-techno-grunge hybrid' style. Reference made to the 'loud' and 'distorted' production qualities of the song could be an indicator as to why the respondent felt grunge is appropriately represented, whilst a number of features including the use of sampling techniques, dotted rhythm drum patterns, and the use of call and response elements may all be found in the hip-hop music style (see chapter four, pp. 171-172, and Alim, 2012, pp. 538-539, Forman, 2002, p. 66, Frane, 2017).

Respondent [10] also makes reference to a hip-hop derived style when referring to the category of 'trap' music that incorporates certain technologies such as the Roland TR-808 drum machine for characteristic kick drum sounds and layered synthesisers often utilised in 'dark' song narratives depicting violence within urban environments (Billboard, 2016).

The perceived heterogeneity of the song is reflected in consumer comments online where the album is variously referred to as: an 'apocalyptic hybrid of post-punk and mowtown [*sic*]' (Adyon, 2017); 'intense, thickly arranged gospel, soul mixed with industrial almost gothic undertones' (Graveson, 2017); and an 'excellent fusion of contemporary (industrial/punk/alternative) and gospel/soul/blues genres' (Sarahon, 2017). These descriptions clearly highlight the hybrid approach to popular song production this

contemporary act take in referring to *other* hybrid styles that may not be perceived as such. As discussed in chapter three (pp. 132-139), cultural hybridity constitutes the roots of blues music and therefore, a 21<sup>st</sup>-century reimagining of the blues may essentially be interpreted as a hybrid product of what is already hybrid, and *Cleveland* is a clear example of this.

## **Contemporary Music and ‘The Blues’**

Surveying the stylistic responses to five analysis objects in LLEs, the song *Cleveland* stands out as being the only song of five within which no respondent referred specifically to blues. By looking at participant responses to other contemporary popular music recordings and their perceptions of blues music or the blues it is possible to suggest the reasons why this is the case. The songs will be discussed in order of how many of the total respondents in each case believed the song they were listening to represented blues or in other words, the perceived ‘bluesiness’ beginning with the song perceived to be the least representative of the blues music tradition.

### ***I Only Lie When I Love You***

The UK band Royal Blood released *I Only Lie When I Love You* as a single on 8 June 2017 from their second album *How Did We Get So Dark?* of the same year. The album reached number one in the UK Albums Chart and remained in the top 100 for 36 weeks (Official UK Charts Company, 2018), whilst the single also peaked at number one for six weeks on the US Billboard Mainstream Rock Chart (Billboard, 2018c). From sixteen total responses to this song (appendices 8.5 and 8.6), only one made reference to blues in using ‘blues/rock’ [10], whilst with the exception of singular response of ‘alternative’ [13], the remaining respondents either referred solely to ‘rock’ or rock in relation to ‘pop’, ‘punk’, ‘alternative’, and ‘indie’. The fact that just over 6% of the group perceived the song to be associated with blues is surprising considering some of the prominent musical characteristics.

The song features minimal accompanying instrumentation, consisting of a bass guitar and drums. However, the band employs a split signal from the monophonic bass guitar lines into both a bass amplifier and a guitar amplifier engaged with distortion and harmonised an octave higher via an effects pedal (Perrin, 2017, p. 114). The overall sense generated is that an electric guitar part is perceived to be present in the mix in addition to the bass when in actual fact one man is performing using a bass guitar only. Even in this configuration, the collective sound of the instruments is not that far removed from Chicago blues (see chapter four, pp. 162-163) and less so from blues-rock, in that there are no digital samples, synthesisers, electronic drum sounds, or even pianos, organs, or brass instruments for instance. As discussed in chapters four (pp. 163-165) and five (pp. 192-194), the 'stripped-down' approach to instrumentation is often associated with and emblematic of the 'honest' early traditions of folk, and as a two-piece band, Royal Blood bear similarities to the White Stripes. The group also allude to rurality through use of a cowbell during each chorus section of the song.

The bass guitar parts are performed using a dropped C# tuning in which the low E string is lowered in pitch by one-and-a-half steps, and the A, D, and G strings are dropped in pitch by a half-step, from standard E tuning. Countless early blues musicians such as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charley Patton, and Robert Johnson, utilised open and dropped tunings to allow them to play in different keys whilst incorporating open strings in performance. The first example of a dropped C# tuning that springs to mind is Blind Willie McTell's most well-known song *Statesboro Blues* recorded in 1928. It is also interesting to note how some music publications omit accurate tuning directions in their transcriptions, as for the aforementioned example in *The Little Black Book of The Blues* wherein the key of C# is indicated but performed in E standard tuning with a capo attached to the first fret (Hopkins, 2012, p. 156), illustrating how perceptions of style and performance may be altered in music-related media forms.

Returning to *I Only Lie When I Love You*, the song is built on repeated bass guitar riffs that feature minor pentatonic and blues scales, with the main verse riff incorporating a 1-b3-4 trichord that outlines the minor pentatonic scale and implies a blues context

(Everett, 2009, p. 169), whilst the chorus riff also makes use of the highly characteristic augmented fourth note of the blues scale. The articulation of blue notes in performance reflects the communicative interplay of other blues styles (Weisethaunet, 2001, p. 103), but in this case the overall depth of interplay is minimal due to both the number of band members and the unison effects applied to the bass guitar lines within a mix that highlights the ‘rhythmic groove’ of the song. A blues ‘feel’ has also been detected by members of the media who have questioned singer-bassist Mike Kerr on the impact of blues on the song to which he explained ‘I mean, I love the blues, but I tend to go for things that are more influenced by the blues and aren’t straight blues’ (Bosso, 2017, p. 42). Similarly to the categorisation of the music by Algiers, Royal Blood are also classified on AllMusic.com (AllMusic, 2018b) as being representative of ‘alternative (indie) rock’ and ‘punk blues’, but perhaps a similar conception of ‘straight blues’ (see, pp. 39-40) impacts on the way in which the song is perceived amongst young consumers, as the reimagining of stylistic materials of blues tradition clearly evident in *I Only Lie When I Love You* were largely unrecognised by the sixteen respondents who listened to the song.

## ***Freedom***

American singer Beyoncé released *Freedom* as a single from the album *Lemonade* in 2016 reaching number fifteen on the UK R&B Singles Chart and number 35 on the US Billboard Hot 100 Chart. Considering the global profile and success of the artist, it is slightly surprising that ten of the eleven respondents in the group had not heard the song prior to the LLE (Appendix 8.1). A cover version by a competition entrant was also broadcast on the television programme *The Voice UK* (2017) in March 2017.

Unsurprisingly, six respondents believed the song represented a ‘pop’ music style, whilst the same number of listeners noted the performance of US rapper Kendrick Lamar in one section of the song when referring to that associated music style. Five respondents felt *Freedom* was representative of soul, whilst four (36%) individuals referred to blues.

The overarching lyrical theme of the song centres on resilience, and more specifically the empowerment of black women, in the face of personal and national challenges.

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The song challenges the stereotypical view of how women should act in society, and the lyrics to the chorus allude to Beyoncé's resilience as a black woman in standing up to her husband's infidelity in assertive and self-empowering language. This lyrical element of personal crisis has long been linked to blues tradition, as US philosopher Cornel West (Kim, 2009) states, echoing American novelist Ralph Ellison, 'that's what it is to be a blues people - the blues is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically, and to do it with grace and dignity' (Kim, 2009, p. 2). In fact, personal themes of heartache and infidelity are present in the first ever blues recording *Crazy Blues* sung by Mamie Smith and released in 1920. The main difference in the narrative is that the female protagonist, in spite of her devotion, is affected to such a degree by her partner's infidelity, and then finally by his permanent departure, that she contemplates suicide:

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The Mamie Smith recording has also been highlighted by David Brackett (2016) as a potential precursor to gangsta rap (see p. 113 and Forman, 2012, p. 259) through reference to ‘cop killing’ at the end of the song in the lyric ‘get myself a gun, and shoot myself a cop’ (Brackett, 2016, p. 86). The inference is that heartache has driven the protagonist ‘crazy’ to the point that she also contemplates homicide. The references to rap music and challenges to law enforcement authorities transport our attention back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the content of *Freedom* within which the aforementioned rap section refers to ‘six headlights wavin’ in my direction, Five-O askin’ me what’s in my possession’ and ‘fire hydrants’. The first two lines connote being apprehended and challenged by the police (the number of headlights signifying a police car, and a US slang term for the police ‘Five-O’ based on the television show *Hawaii Five-O*) and the suppression of protest is signalled in the term fire hydrants, often used by law enforcement to bring crowds of people under control.

Cophonographic references (see chapter six, p. 227) in the accompanying video to *Freedom* make clear the lyrics also refer to racism and police brutality in the United States whilst simultaneously strengthening the feminist message of the song as the mothers of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner are seen with photos of their deceased sons in the visual footage. There is a subtle reference in the chorus lyric ‘I can’t move’ to the circumstance surrounding the latter’s passing within which filmed footage captures the detainee shouting ‘I can’t breathe’ a phrase that was later used by the Black Lives Matter movement as a rallying slogan printed prominently on clothing merchandise (Amazon.com, 2018). As illustrated in chapter three (pp. 150-154), specific locations and social-historical associations remain important to musicians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The video for *Freedom* was shot at Madewood Plantation House not far from New Orleans and built in 1846 (Marshall, 2016). The location is not only historically significant to the conveyance of the message in the song but New Orleans still also carries what George Lipsitz (2011) refers to as ‘long and mean-spirited traditions’ of segregation and police violence in the ‘racialised spaces’ of the present, traditions that black artists have continually challenged by turning ‘segregation into congregation’ (Lipsitz, 2011, pp. 226-227).

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The second verse of *Freedom* makes allusion to the spiritual *Wade in the Water* first published in 1901 (Work, 1902). Abolitionist Harriet Tubman is understood to have used the song to guide slaves to freedom by instructing them to enter the water to shake off slave owner dogs trailing their scent (Sullivan, 2013, p. 387). Beyoncé emphasises her resilience through use of the term ‘bullet proof’ and references the blues tradition which in West’s characterisation ‘locate the catastrophe in the quotidian, in the everyday’ and that the blues ‘tries to equip and provide armour to endure day-to-day, for every moment in space and time’ (Kim, 2009, pp. 12-13). The song also features two interphonographic quotes taken from Alan Lomax’s field recordings collection, the first refers to a worship service led by Reverend R.C. Crenshaw at Memphis’ Great Harvest Missionary Baptist Church in 1959 and the second quotes a 1948 work song called *Stewball* led by Benny Will Richardson, at the Mississippi State Penitentiary, also known as Parchman Farm, historically one of the toughest prisons in the United States (Lomax-Wood, 2016). These autsonic samples reinforce the aforementioned themes of the song in reference to overcoming oppression.

Whilst most participants deduced that the song contained a political theme concerned with racism, and one participant [5] identified a theme of female empowerment, the historic and cultural references made in the lyrics show how Beyoncé is ‘speaking’ to certain people in society, an approach that characterises other songs from the same album such as *Formation* which may also be described as resisting interpretation by a white mainstream audience. This approach in itself is linked to the traditions of the past

wherein overt social commentary would generally be reserved for members of society who shared the same sociocultural norms and signs (Taft, 2013, p. 294).

Harmonically, *Freedom* incorporates the Dorian mode in D with the chorus section outlining i-bIII-IV-v (the v chord not sounded but implied) and so the 1-b3-4 blues trichord is outlined strongly. Another characteristic feature of this section is the sharpening of the fourth (G) towards an augmented fourth in the vocal track on the word 'chains'. Over F major the resultant effect is a minor third interval against a major third in the harmony, creating what Hans Weisethaunet (2001) refers to as 'blue harmony' (see p. 39). It is hard to say with precision which element, or combination of elements, described above proved to elicit a stylistic response of blues from four of the participants in the group, as there are strong links to tradition, some of which have been illustrated here (for discussion of limitations of language and musical meaning, see pp. 56-57).

## ***Alabama***

The fourth object is the song *Alabama* by the group called NuBlues led by British guitarist and producer Ramon Goose. It is from the second album *Snow on the Tracks* released in 2008 on the French label Dixiefrog Records and in the United States on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Blues Records. Goose has since gone on to explore the link between blues and African music in the West African Blues Project and made several collaborative recordings and live performance tours with musicians from Senegal and Algeria. He has also worked with another artist who had previously reimagined the blues in the US, Chris Thomas King. Not unexpectedly, none of the respondents had heard the song prior to the LLE (appendices 8.2 and 8.7) and it should be emphasised that both the title of the group and the song were not displayed for participants to see at any point. In fourteen responses to the song, eleven (79%) believed *Alabama* represented blues and in this case there were a number of variants of blues categories offered, two participants referred to 'blues rock', three listeners used 'Delta blues', whilst seven people thought 'country' was an appropriate stylistic label and six listeners believed it represented 'rock'. Two

respondents referred to 'deep south' and another listener referred to 'western'. The general consensus amongst predominately young listeners in this study then is that *Alabama* is blues music and on AllMusic.com (AllMusic, 2018c) NuBlues are simply referred to by the blues genre and do not have any other stylistic label.

The song is a hyperphonogram (see, pp. 59-60) of *Alabama Blues* (1965) as recorded by blues performer J.B. Lenoir, within which the message of the song is made clear in the lyrics:

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The lyrical focus of the NuBlues song takes elements of the second and third stanzas of *Alabama Blues* in which the third line is depersonalised in that a reference to 'brother' in the hypophonogram is altered to 'him' in *Alabama*. In Lenoir's recording there is both a sense that the protagonist once may have loved Alabama but no longer does and 'never will', and an element of either self-pity and/or reference to personal impoverishment in the words 'poor me'. The NuBlues recording removes this through the omission of the word 'poor' and negates the possibility that the protagonist may have once loved Alabama, as seen in the words to the first verse:

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The archetypal AAB lyrical pattern in *Alabama Blues* is amended in *Alabama* with an AABA pattern in which the first line is repeated a second time and then also after the varying third line, with each lyrical line occupying four bars. The twelve-bar blues form of Lenoir's recording is replaced by a sixteen-bar verse that discards the I-IV-V harmony and is instead underpinned by a repetitive open-ended gesture comprised of a bass guitar riff that outlines a D minor triad for the majority of the song (and similarly to *Freedom*, also utilises D Dorian mode). This iterative looping technique is typical of the way in which contemporary musicians reimagine song materials in the production environment provided by a DAW (digital audio workstation). At this point in time, the role of a DAW can be seen to function as an instrument in the same way in which a guitar or piano may enable aesthetic judgments to be made in the compositional process, and within which such judgments may also be made utilising visual representations of musical material in digital audio software (for autonomy with DAWs, see chapter four, p. 172; negative perceptions of DAWs, see chapter five, p. 197; and accuracy of digital sequencing, see p. 212).

What is surprising is that none of the respondents referred to a hip-hop style despite the drumbeat that features a dotted rhythmic pattern providing the groove for the entire track. One reason for this could be that the accompanying instrumentation signifies more strongly in the minds of the listeners than the drumbeat which, following the introduction, gets pushed back in the mix as other instruments emerge. One respondent [1] even notes a 'contemporary blues beat' in describing what is heard. Compared to the relatively sparse texture of *Alabama Blues* within which the vocal is only accompanied by an acoustic guitar, the NuBlues song features multiple acoustic guitar tracks, electric guitar parts, bass guitar, drums and even a string section. The presence of acoustic slide guitar performed throughout *Alabama* caught the attention of many participants (only two respondents omitted 'guitar' in their descriptions of the song) and it is heavily featured in

guitar solo sections that occur after each verse. The long association between slide guitar technique and blues tradition is well documented and it is suggested that the reimagining of such connotative musical materials here in a contemporary context has the potential to alter perceptions of musical style and genre, as seen in the stylistic responses of the participants in this study.

### ***Mad Man Blues***

The fifth analysis object is *Mad Man Blues*, a remix of the John Lee Hooker recording of the same name which was originally released in 1950 under the pseudonym John Lee Booker for Chess Records. This particular remix is by a Dutch producer Jan Mittendorp, also known as Mixendorp, and was uploaded to the artist's SoundCloud page in 2011 and downloaded in 2016 (Mixendorp, 2011). For reasons unknown, the recording has since been removed but a live version with an extended introduction still exists on YouTube (Mixendorp, 2014), and further reference is made in a subsequent performance *Mad Man* uploaded to the same site in 2017 (ElectroBluesSociety, 2017). Two years after the recording was made available to listen to on the online music platform, promotional hyperlinks for the song posted on Twitter from the artist's account started incorporating the hashtag #electroblues (Mixendorp, 2013) and continued to do so thereafter. From the nine participants who took part (Appendix 8.3), eight offered a stylistic response (89%) to the 2011 recording with all suggesting that the song was representative of blues. Six listeners provided at least one additional stylistic response with hip-hop being the second most frequently suggested (three instances).

Whilst the foundations of the remix primarily consist of autsonic samples (p. 59) taken from the hypophonogram, a reimagining of the blues is performed not only through a recontextualising of John Lee Hooker's recorded performance (similarly to the approach taken by Moby on *Play*) but in reconfiguring the original recording itself through a number of editing processes. The 1950 recording contains one of Hooker's signature rhythmic approaches to performance, as heard in much of his material including *Boogie*

*Chillun*, *Goin' Mad Blues*, and *Devil's Jump*, and what Fernando Benadon and Ted Gioia (2009) refer to as a duple 'isoriff' that is inherently a triplet figure but converted, in performance, into a duple riff (Benadon & Gioia, 2009, p. 23). The use of a duple isoriff, converted from a triplet isoriff (well-known examples of which being Robert Johnson's *I Believe I'll Dust My Broom*, and Elmore James's later recording *Dust My Broom*) and typical of John Lee Hooker's 'boogies' is significant in that it microcosmically represents the larger metrical shift in popular music occurring from the 1950s in the switch from 12/8 time which implies a shuffle feel, to straight eighth notes as in 8/8 time. The perpetual use of upbeats in Hooker's *Mad Man Blues* creates a driving syncopated effect that when combined with an up-tempo 12/8 feel draws on boogie-woogie and big band swing to produce a new style that is, like these earlier styles, also appropriate for dancing. Hooker made reference to this reimagining of the blues as 'jump' in stating 'I have created about three different fields; a folk field, a blues field, and a jump field for the kids....The big market today is [*sic*] folksongs and blues and jump' (Hooker in Evans, 1982, p. 84). This type of experimentation combined with the utilisation of an electric instrument meant that Hooker, along with Muddy Waters did not quite fit the criteria of the folk revivalists of the 1950s and early 1960s (see chapter four, pp. 163-164). It has also more recently been suggested by Elijah Wald (2010) that the origins of hip-hop music have also been traced back to the 'proto-rap' of Hooker's largely spoken approach but also points out this is a highly contested view, particularly amongst blues fans (Wald, 2010, p. 78).

In Mixendorp's remix of the song, a hip-hop beat with a fixed tempo provides the underpinning for Hooker's vocal and acoustic guitar with the stomping of his foot largely masked by additional percussive layers and electronic loops. The main groove of the remix is provided by a swung rhythm in the drumbeat that eschews the tempo changes and *accelerando* evident in the source recording that have been found to be largely typical characteristics in studies of blues recordings of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Titon, 1994, p. 152). An improvised guitar solo (01:56) in the hypophonogram, wherein the tempo alters quite dramatically, is removed in the remix and instead an electric guitar part featuring a distorted effect is added heavily referencing the 'well-known' guitar riff from the Led Zeppelin song *Whole Lotta Love*. The use of inverted commas here refers

to the fact none of the participants in the LLE in any way alluded to this song or the group in the responses provided, although one stylistic reference to ‘rock’ [3] may be the result of a perception of the guitar part and the associated timbral characteristics. As a result, the slightly ironic reference to the white rock group who drew on the traditions of the past and in this case, the lyrics of the Willie Dixon song *You Need Love*, in their reimagining of the blues is lost.

Also noticeable is the use of stereo panning effects and additional autsonic samples taken from a recording of an Alan Lomax interview with Big Bill Broonzy (Natchez), Memphis Slim (Leroy), and John Lee “Sonny Boy” Williamson (Sib) in the 1940s which was released in 1957 on *Blues In The Mississippi Night*. The field recording contains a discussion of working conditions and life in the South, and quotations used in the remix include Broonzy stating ‘they couldn’t play the blues even if they wanted’ and Sonny Boy Williamson making reference to an uncle who was hanged ‘because they say [*sic*] he was crazy’. The lyrics in the second verse of the source recording refer to a threat of hanging as a result of the protagonist’s paranoia regarding a cheating partner and so the audio sample appears to concur with the narrative in the hypophonogram.

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Where this verse is retained in the remix, the last verse that alludes to drowning the untrustworthy partner is removed and throughout the duration the lyrical line ‘got the mad man blues’ is repeated more frequently. None of the respondents associated the meaning of the recording with either the inherent narrative of the John Lee Hooker hypophonogram or any narrative that may be perceived in the reimagining of the aforementioned materials in a new context. Respondents [2] and [8] referred to ‘complaint’ and ‘pain’ respectively while respondent [1] elaborated no further on the

meaning being a ‘fusion of early African American influenced blues and modern electronic dance/hip hop [*sic*]’.

Frustrated with a perceived separation of African-American culture from the blues style that developed in the 1960s and which still persists today, Mittendorf’s ‘early attempt’ to mix ‘the raw power of the blues and blend it with current more electronic music forms’ is based on the notion that ‘the blues and the [*sic*] modern electronic music are both based on repetition and dancing’ (J. Mittendorf 2018, personal communication, April 11th). In this respect, the remix of Mad Man Blues could be seen as an artistic response to the cultural irrelevance of what may be perceived as a modernist popular music style. The individualism exhibited and prized in, for instance, the long guitar solos typified in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the music of Joe Bonamassa, is replaced by the affordance of a greater communal function in dance that is enabled by the use of hip-hop beats and electronic loops (see also a sense of place and community in hip-hop, pp. 34-35). A biography page on the artist’s record label also refers to how the relative stagnation of the blues style of the 1960s, as indicated by David Evans (Evans, 2002, p. 42), has been constrained by the ‘gatekeepers of the blues tradition’ (Black and Tan, 2018), and so the remix could also be seen as challenging this demarcation of blues music and culture through a contemporary reimagining of the blues tradition through John Lee Hooker’s recording. In this case, technology has permitted the expressive and emotive qualities of the hypophonogram, and the diction within it, to be heard with minimal distortion or commentary in a contemporary context, which perhaps explains why 89% of the respondents feel the remix represents the blues.

## **Blues Definitions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

From a total of 61 respondents who took part in the aforementioned LLEs (see LLE, chapter one, pp. 71-76), 55 (90.1%) were aged between 18 and 25 years old, four (6.5%) were 26 to 35 years old and two (3.2%) were between the ages of 46 and 55 (Appendix 9.4). The overall group of listeners consists of 56 (91.8%) who identified as white, and

one individual (1.64%) who identified as black with five (8.2%) respondents of a non-white ethnicity (Appendix 9.5). Only five (8%) participants in this predominantly young group stated that they listened to blues music amongst other musical styles, a statistic that correlates with other quantitative research conducted online concerning blues music. In anonymous surveys distributed to third-party websites that explored the relationships between listeners and their connections with the blues, Marie Trout (2017) found that eight out of ten of the 1000 blues fans who participated were aged between 45 and 70 years old whilst 90% were white (Trout, 2017, p. 303). In a study on the use of online technology to experience blues music and blues culture, Tom Attah (2016) also found that from 512 participants only eighteen (3.5%) were aged between 18 and 24, whilst 185 (36.1%) were aged between 55 and 64, and 137 (26.8%) were aged between 45 and 54 (Attah, 2016, p. 294). The statistics from these surveys fit in with the general public conception that blues is a preferred listening material for older generations, and coincidentally only this morning a television advertisement appeared marketing a blues compilation in a CD format as a suitable gift for Father's Day. Needless to say, the advertisement did not contain any audio clips of Beyoncé, Algiers, or Royal Blood.

In four of the LLEs (appendices 8.1-8.4) 38 respondents are asked to provide a response to the question 'in your opinion please describe in your own words what blues music is?' to which one participant skipped the question and another simply responded 'not sure, I don't really listen to blues'. In three other LLEs (appendices 8.5-8.7) 23 respondents are asked to provide a response to the question 'in your opinion please describe in your own words what "the blues" is?' in which one person stated 'I don't know'. In total then, there were 60 responses and 58 that contained some sort of interpretation of what the blues is. Each response is coded with a descriptive heading and a synthesis of these qualitatively coded groups can be used to see what associations are frequently made with blues music and the blues:

Race (R) 6  
 Age (A) 0  
 Time (T) 5  
 Music Stylistic Features (M) 22 (5 in 'The Blues')  
 Cultural Expression (CE) 1  
 Place (P) 9  
 Socio-economic (S) 4  
 Emotion (E) 17  
 Genre (C) 31  
 Themes (Th) 7  
 Expression (Ex) 18  
 Sociocultural (SC) 1  
 Spiritual (I) 2  
 Social Practice (SP) 1

*Figure 15: Total number of individual responses referring to heading*

The figure above is a summary of the headings used to code the responses provided to question seven in each LLE (appendices 8.1-8.7) with a tally of how many responses referred to such. To be clear, these headings are grounded in the data and are extracted from each individual response and cross-referenced with all other responses. As can be clearly seen, the listeners as a group most frequently made reference to genre or other music genres. Jazz (10), rock (9), and soul (8) are most commonly cited in interpretations of blues whilst blues is defined as a genre itself in eight responses. Only two references to folk are made and one instance each of bluegrass, country and 'street music'. Whilst references to rock may be useful in defining the blues chronologically [16], the use of words jazzy and soulful in multiple responses perhaps illustrate some of the difficulties in defining the blues with specificity. This can also be seen in some of the ambiguous responses that refer to musical features thought to be characteristic of blues such as those referring to harmony, for example, 'limited chords' [26], and timbre,

‘twangy’ [15]. In terms of ‘voices’ in the blues, the guitar (5) and vocal (4) were the most frequently cited sound sources, whilst three respondents suggested the twelve-bar form was emblematic of blues. Another respondent [33] refers to the harmony that underpins this structure, in what is suggested as reducing the blues to arguably its most stereotypical musical feature, ‘I, IV, I, V, IV, I’. Apart from these characteristics, a small number of listeners referred to both tempo, perceived by three respondents as slow and the mood, thought to be one of relaxation, whilst a singular mention of Robert Johnson is also noted [52]. Expression and expressive qualities represented by such terms as powerful (2), passionate (3), meaning (2), soulful (4), down-to-earth (1), deep (1), and raw (1) are also mentioned whilst aspects of emotion, particularly negative emotions are also suggested as being characteristic of blues in being perceived as depressing (1), melancholic (2), sad (2), and angry (1). Respondent [18] defined blues as ‘an important movement contributing to racial unity and representation in the USA’ whilst three respondents specifically characterise blues as black music (for racialisation of music, see pp. 21-27, and black music, chapter two, pp. 109-114). Two responses include references to slavery whilst themes of oppression, complaint, and pain are also thought to be characteristic of the music (for the legacy of slavery, black music, and the blues, see chapter two, pp. 87-94).

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Robert Johnson’s *Drunken Hearted Man* would be one of many examples that reflect and encapsulate many of the musical and thematic features noted in the interpretations of blues noted above. As noted in chapter two (pp. 116-122) and chapter four (pp. 163, 178-179), romantic visions of Johnson and both the influence of mass media forms and the activities of folk revivalists and record collectors have largely shaped a general contemporary understanding of the blues. In a postmodern context where technological mediation, particularly in digital formats, is abundant, Johnson is both remembered for who he was and how he is continually reimagined in the media, making him an

‘exemplary postmodern mythic figure’ (Schroeder, 2004, p. 54) and it is argued that by extension this reimagining applies to blues music as well, constraining how ‘popular’ music consumers perceive blues music and blues culture.

## **YouTube & Prosthetic Memory**

In addition to permitting the use of visual elements to accompany music, video-hosting sites such as YouTube provide a multitude of benefits to users such as: the relatively unrestricted access that enables professionals and amateurs alike to upload content onto the platform; the facilitation of online teaching and learning; live event streaming capabilities; the availability of previously discontinued artefacts; and a stage for engagement in an online community. The 61 respondents in the LLEs were asked how often they used such platforms in an average week (Appendix 9.2) and over 60% (37) used video-hosting sites for more than 10 hours a week (Appendix 9.3). Eleven respondents regularly exceed 20 hours per week and all respondents use sites such as YouTube at least once a week with fourteen (22.95%) watching or listening up to 4 hours of content on a weekly basis. On-demand streaming services including YouTube can be accessed for free virtually anywhere and so it is no surprise that predominantly young participants who undertook the LLEs use such sites on a regular basis. In research commissioned by The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), Ipsos Connect conducted a survey with 900 internet users in each of thirteen of the world’s leading music markets including the United States and the United Kingdom and found that in 2016, 93% of 16-24-year-olds used YouTube for music consumption (IFPI, 2016b, p. 10). The overall percentage of visitors to the site who use the service for consuming music is also increasing from 82% in 2016 to 85%, an estimated 1.3 billion users, in 2017 (IFPI, 2017b, p. 16). It is also noted that the majority of music consumers on the platform (76%) listen to music that is already known to them (IFPI, 2017b, p. 17). The developers of YouTube have clearly noted the prevalence of music consumption on the site and have recently announced an upgraded YouTube Music subscription service that allows users to search for songs simply by entering a description of what the music

sounds like. Additionally, the ubiquitous nature of music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is encapsulated in a new home screen that provides recommendations based on a user's location, current activity, and previous playlists.

Alison Landsberg (2004) refers to the interchangeability and unnaturalness of 'prosthetic' memories which can be 'acquired by anyone, regardless of skin color, ethnic background, or biology' in a period dubbed the postmodern, and within which technologies of mass culture are 'sophisticated enough to become the sites of experience' (Landsberg, 2004, pp. 2, 33). Landsberg is referring to the affordances of contemporary media technologies that may permit the remembrance of events in the past by consumers who never lived through such experiences; noted examples include the Holocaust and slavery in the United States. Such memories are not socially constructed as they are not 'the result of living and being raised in particular social frameworks', and appear at the interface between individual and collective experience, having the ability to not only generate empathy but 'alter a person's political outlook and affiliation as well as to motivate political action' (Landsberg, 2004, pp. 19, 24).

This 'strategic' remembering is also political in that the process of remembering as selecting provides the recall of sense experiences that are deemed significant, whilst insignificant experiences are ignored, creating gaps and contradictions that lead to new configurations, and as previously demonstrated (see chapter one pp. 47-51, and chapter two, pp. 96-101) strategic remembrance takes place within a context of culture. With over a billion hours of online footage viewed globally each day (Goodrow, 2017), YouTube is certainly a mass cultural technology that in its audio/visual configuration is conducive to prosthetic remembrance. As noted elsewhere (chapter one, pp. 68, chapter two, pp. 95-96) ethnomusicological studies (for example, Montero-Diaz, 2017, Tan, 2017, and Falk, 2013) have demonstrated how minority populations may be portrayed through central representational forms such as YouTube, and such media may also support cultural revival and bring about new experiences and configurations of expression that were previously not possible with earlier technological media.

Listening to music also provides a comparatively convenient and efficient way of summoning memories, unlike the time required to consume other artefacts such as books and feature-length films. Andy Bennett and Ian Rogers (2016) refer to a ‘memory boom’ in perspectives on popular music production, performance, and consumption since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

This conceptual development reflects and responds to an ever-increasing trend in everyday life whereby popular music is celebrated not merely in terms of its connections with the socio-political and cultural “here and now”, but also in terms of its cultural legacy - its shaping of particular attitudes, understandings and socio-aesthetic sensibilities over time (Bennett & Rogers, 2016, p. 37).

In the context of this chapter, what is important to note here is the power of music to shape attitudes, understandings, and ‘socio-aesthetic sensibilities’ particularly in relation to how listeners perceive the blues and how the blues may be perceived in other popular music objects. The YouTube videos that circulate aesthetic material enable prosthesis to be changed as desired, and the associated memories can never be owned as private property but are uniquely positioned both within and opposed to capitalism. Analogously, the blues in recorded form has long been romantically defined as an unpopular popular music, a folk form consumed by the masses but simultaneously regarded as ‘opposing’ the commodification of mass culture that enables the blues to be consumed (for concepts of the commodification of popular culture including hip-hop, see chapter one, pp. 54-55). In order to understand the impact of memory in relation to the responses provided by participants in the study, it is worth looking at how blues music and blues culture is received on a mass cultural platform such as YouTube.

In a study of twenty of the most watched ‘learn to play blues music’ instructional YouTube videos, Tom Attah (2016) found that most videos emphasised mechanical facility of performance through, for example, close-up footage of a performer’s hands instead of any formal music theory (Attah, 2016, p. 156). This suggests that a viewer is primarily engaged in spatio-motor thinking at the expense of acquiring the perceptual

capability to recognise the theoretical characteristics of the music, potentially leading to a lack of experience and subsequent knowledge when identifying something as simple as a blues trichord without visual aid. Whilst such aids can clarify some of the perceived performative difficulties in learning songs by both a performer such as Robert Johnson, who utilised a number of different instrumental tunings and pitch-altering devices such as a capo, and some of the complications brought about by variable recording and playback speeds of the songs Johnson recorded, it is suggested the resultant effect of this type of consumer engagement permits both a closer alignment to the traditions of the past, through the acquisition of a perceived accuracy in performance, and a reimagining of the past in the demystification of black music performance, which as previously noted, heavily surrounds blues music culture and its icons.

Whilst a focus on individual learning contrasts to some extent with the communal traditions of blues music performance, YouTube is an ever-increasingly popular wellspring for musicians. Even those who generally favour face-to-face learning, such as the English folk musicians Elise Gayraud (2016) encountered in her study, view the platform as becoming a central resource in developing instrumental techniques and song repertoire in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite the participatory character of the video-hosting site making it somewhat unreliable (Gayraud, 2016, pp. 194-196). The unreliability of online content is also exacerbated by the viewing recommendations made on platforms such as YouTube that are partly underwritten by algorithmic processes and additionally by sequential viewing aggregates. Perceptions of music style, genre, and the performers who characterise such, may be shaped by such digital transphonographic practices in which specific traditions of the past may be both augmented and diminished by members of the community who both upload artefacts to the site, and not only follow existing preset networks of suggested materials but also contribute to the process merely by watching a singular video which is recorded as a view.

In organological studies Kevin Dawe (2013) refers to the impact such technology is having in bringing guitar virtuosi found outside of Europe and North America to the attention of a broader audience, whilst acknowledging that the hegemony of Western

performers such as Joe Satriani and B.B. King remains intact (Dawe, 2013, p. 5). Despite the perception of an increasing cultural diversity in the content uploaded to YouTube, potentially enriching cultural experiences can just as easily be ignored. A fact demonstrated by Attah (2016) in his findings of the diminishing number of viewers engaging with *BluesTalk* as the series of twelve lectures progressed (Attah, 2016, pp. 165-166). The series is created by blues scholar Adam Gussow and is concerned with the sociocultural background of the blues including the literary works of W.C. Handy, Zora Neal Hurston, and Langston Hughes in an attempt to educate users of YouTube on the black southern world within which the blues was nurtured. The results of Attah's study are perhaps indicative of how codal incompetence and codal interference in Tagg's model of communication (see chapter seven, p. 244) are manifest in daily consumer practices that may be detrimental to the decoding of messages in popular music artefacts.

These studies highlight how the transformational potential of contemporary music learning is both enabled and constrained through the same medium of consumption. Content may be viewed on demand or by recommendation, and at other times ignored in a context of potential fragmentation. Therefore, video-hosting sites offer unlimited possibilities for reimagining the blues both as a listener and as a performer, enabling global engagement in cultural content that may otherwise be very hard, if not impossible to access. Such reimagining may be performed through the repeated acquisition of sensations, perceptions, and 21<sup>st</sup> century experiences that increase the cultural hybridity of blues music, and that 'open [*sic*] the door for a new relation to the past' in strategic remembering 'that has ramifications for the politics of the present' (Landsberg, 2004, p. 152).

## **Streaming**

In the UK, over half of all domestic music consumption (50.4%) is accounted for by streaming with up to 1.5 billion audio streams recorded in a single week of 2017 by the British Phonographic Industry. Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer and other streaming

services supplied 68.1 billion audio streams over the course of the year, representing a 51.5% increase compared with 2016 (BPI, 2018). The results of the LLEs revealed that whilst approximately half of the 61 participants in the study used multiple formats for listening including the CD format (29), digital music downloads (30), video-hosting sites (30) and vinyl records (24), 53 (86.89%) of the listeners used streaming services for music consumption (for contextual background to music streaming, see chapter four, pp. 181-182). This significant shift in music consumption practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has impacted not only on listeners but has also impeded potential revenues for musicians, who have had to find alternative ways to generate income. The impact of free on-demand streaming services on musicians is partly the result of the squeeze on profit margins experienced by hugely popular subscription services such as Spotify that in 2016 almost doubled its operating losses despite yearly increases in revenues to 2.9 billion euros and doubling its number of paid subscribed members to 50 million by March, 2017 (Lee, 2017). In order to redress this complication, service providers are now looking at how to maximise potential sales by using data stored in subscriber profiles along with information referring to user preferences and location transmitted by smartphone technology, to specifically target consumers with appropriate products. The ubiquity of music in our everyday lives makes it a particularly rich source for ‘data mining’ as musicologist Noriko Manabe (2018) illustrates:

Spotify can learn that a listener runs every morning, and generate playlists to match her running pace at that time. It also knows how the weather affects musical choices in a given city and can offer mood-soothing music on a rainy day. It is also integrated with Tinder, a dating app with its own algorithms to match users based on swiping patterns, mutual friends, and common interests (Manabe, 2018, p. 451).

Over the course of time and through familiarity with such algorithms, users of streaming services may become highly attuned to the ways of knowing provided by the underpinning logic to the extent that they may alter their behaviour to match such implicit presumptions, potentially shaping their view of the world. Despite consuming music in a

greater proliferation of formats than is perhaps expected, the majority of participants in the study are clearly engaged with streaming services and are therefore engaged with such algorithms providing data about who they are, what they are doing, and where they are and this impacts on how music categories are organised, creating what David Brackett (2016) refers to as a ‘feedback loop’ (see chapter one, pp. 55-56). In the context of this chapter, therefore, it is necessary to provide an overview of how blues music as a category is commercially received in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through such services that potentially shape the response of listeners, including those who offered interpretations of popular music objects and the blues in this study.

## **Blues Sales**

The fact that a small proportion (8%) of the participants in the study stated that they listened to blues music is reflective of the comparatively low quantity of sales blues recordings draw in relation to rock and pop categories in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2017 rock genre sales contributed 20.8% of the total audio consumption in the United States surpassed only, and for the first time, by the R&B/hip-hop genre which accounted for 24.5% of the total volume of sales (Nielsen, 2018, p. 31). The blues genre does not feature in the end of year Nielsen 2016 report (Nielsen, 2017), and similarly, the blues genre is absent from the 2017 record (Nielsen, 2018). In 2016 rock constituted 34.4% of audio sales across all formats in the United Kingdom followed closely by the pop genre accounting for 32.2% (BPI, 2017, p. 38) whilst blues contributed 1.2%, a 0.4% increase on the previous year and noted to be largely due to the success of the Rolling Stones album *Blue and Lonesome* released at the beginning of December which reached number one in the UK album chart and remained on the chart for fifteen weeks (Official Charts, 2018). The blues genre contributed even less to streaming only sales in the UK (0.4%) but fared slightly better in vinyl format album sales when combined with jazz contributing 2.5% behind dance (3%), urban (6.7%), pop (13.2%) and rock (68.1%). Needless to say, blues as a music label (see, pp. 4-5) does not ‘sell’ and this clearly

affects the decision-making within the network of individuals and groups who represent contemporary musicians in the music industry and those vendors who sell such music. As an experienced record shop owner in his forty-fourth year of working in music retail, Dave Hill of BPM Records noted how other companies struggled to sell jazz and blues records when planning his new business venture, pointing both to the difficulty of ‘getting good stock’ with regards to blues and how categorisation processes generally get complicated (providing examples from Eric Clapton’s back catalogue and the output of the two line-up configurations of Fleetwood Mac) and so retains an a-to-z of pop/rock which ‘covers most areas’ in addition to a collector’s section and a small number of blues records in the corner of his store reserved for ‘the older artists’ such as ‘the John Lee Hookers’ (D. Hill, personal communication, April 19, 2018). Founder and editor-in-chief of the long-running UK publication *Blues Matters!* Alan Pearce suggests musicians and their representatives were ‘forced to fight for shelf space’ in record stores, as outlets reduced the number of stylistic categories and the number of record stores closing down increased, leading many struggling musicians to embrace blues-rock or rock-blues labels in order to maximise earning potential (A. Pearce, personal communication, April 13, 2018). The historical insistence of US genre classification of music in for example country, urban, and blues styles has been noted by media scholar Will Straw (1999) to be the primary factor in declining music sales during the 1990s in global markets, as European and Asian record label representatives sought less ‘purist’ styles of music than those sent by US head offices, music that held greater mainstream appeal for local consumers. More recently, the results of a survey on the African-American consumption of music provided the basis for a 2014 headline that black audiences favoured listening to the music forms they nurtured, and blues was not found to be amongst the statistical data presented, which did include R&B (34%), gospel (14%), hip-hop (13%), rap (6%), and smooth jazz (4%) (Nielsen, 2014, p. 3), and in 2012, 3 million blues songs were sold in a digital format compared to 323 million rock tracks (Keyes, 2015).

Blues music most definitely appears to deserve the title of unpopular popular music, as musicians appear to be desperate to avoid the label, embrace other labels that increase the chances of sales, or experiment in changing artistic direction completely. It is

unsurprising then that the world's best selling album of 2016 by Beyoncé from which *Freedom* is taken, is predominately labelled as R&B, and that Royal Blood's number one album *How Did We Get So Dark?* released in the following year, is classified with a rock label. By contrast, the objects with an overt blues label such as those discussed in this chapter by NuBlues and Mixendorp are comparatively obscure recordings in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with little mainstream media coverage and therefore were never likely to make an impact on the music charts. Although the aforementioned Rolling Stones album sold the sixth highest number of copies in the world in 2016, a product comprised solely of twelve blues cover songs, it is abundantly clear this is the result of the group's global status as pioneers of popular music culture in the 1960s and so it is suggested a similar number of album sales could be achieved by the group, regardless of the stylistic or generic content of the music.

## **Theorising Music Consumption**

That the predominantly young white cohort does not listen to blues, as is marketed in the music industry, implies that the 56 individuals *choose* not to listen to blues. Combined with the stereotypical associations offered in the descriptions of what the blues is perceived to be and the strong connotations of digitally sampled material from the past that suggest the blues most strongly in contemporary recordings, there is a sense the blues purports a degree of 'corniness' in young listeners through its 'outdated' formula. The musical materials reimagined in the contemporary songs discussed in this chapter are standardised (see conceptual and theoretical framework, chapter one, p. 54) through their repetition of use in popular music forms, yet the blues has long been conceptualised to exist *outside* of the popular music industry and positioned in opposition to the very commodity forms that enable its existence. In this context, it is suggested that the blues as a popular music market category exists only to support the pseudo-individualisation of consumer practice through its unpopular distinction as perpetuated in the music industry. It is further suggested then, that young listeners from an industry perspective are not *supposed* to listen to blues music as Theodor W. Adorno (2002) has suggested 'if some

song is played again and again on the air, the listener begins to think that it is already a success' and 'repetition itself is accepted as a sign of its popularity' (Adorno, 2002, p. 457). Through a combined demarcation of the boundaries of blues music and its position as an unpopular music form, a continual reimagining of the blues is enabled as young listeners do not conceive the blues as popular and pay little attention to it. Therefore, popular music consumers may subsequently have little familiarity with the cultural materials that are reimagined in contemporary contexts, beyond the stereotypical definition (see p. 40) purported in the music industry itself. Listener responses to the stylistic categorisation of *Cleveland* show familiarity with industry labelling practices that Adorno asserts are the 'trademarks of identification for differentiating between the actually undifferentiated' (Adorno, 2002, p. 446), yet no listener used the term 'electroblues' to describe the Mixendorp remix perhaps further suggesting how blues categories are constrained or ignored in the industry, despite the commercial success of artefacts such as Moby's *Play* that principally rest on a reimagining of past traditions, and indicative of the value of blues as an unpopular music option.

Adorno's critique of popular culture may also resonate in the impact of data mining on stylistic categorisation through the harvesting of personal data to acquire social information to target consumers in the sale of commodities. AllMusic.com instructs people how to 'feel' and interpret music through mood and thematic labels on album reviews and descriptions, and popular streaming services such as Pandora Radio utilise advanced algorithms to organise songs based on fundamental music characteristics to match listening preferences that essentially provides listeners with more of the same. It should be of no surprise then that the blues is commonly understood by participants in the LLEs in relation to other styles that are heavily marketed as popular, and that no respondent thought the blues is suitable for dancing or could convey happiness and an upbeat tempo. In this study, the blues is broadly an expressive and emotive music style and more specifically a style characterised by a slow tempo, twelve-bar form and guitar accompaniment as evident in the recordings made by Robert Johnson that are used to 'haunt' the blues, police the boundaries and ensure it remains unpopular.

It is suggested that YouTube is not only a site of experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but additionally a site of *struggle* facilitating and encouraging strategic remembering through its ease of use and multiplicity, permitting viewers to select which aspects they choose to remember and which they may choose to ignore. YouTube enables a reimagining of the blues through its interface of remembrance, affording a demystification of concepts of blackness through the availability of cultural materials that can be acquired by anyone in most locations of the world. Consequently, stylistically hybrid forms are encouraged whilst blues-marketed music is constrained as a cultural form through white video authors who focus on specific aspects of blues tradition at the expense of others that remain powerfully symbolic to African Americans in the United States.

People are also ‘remembering’ more as part of a 21<sup>st</sup> century ‘memory boom’ (Bennett & Rogers, 2016, p. 37) giving rise to revivalist discourse associated with the blues, resulting in tension over ownership that arises from the uploading, creating, and viewing of audio-visual material for political purposes and nostalgia. This ‘online’ tension is both reflective of and reflected in the real world in the everyday lives of US citizens who for example, may be involved in traffic stops and domestic disputes wherein white law enforcement officials confront black Americans, and which in some cases, results in a loss of life, as depicted in the song *Cleveland*. As a platform heavily used for music consumption, YouTube is a powerful tool in the struggle over the ownership of cultural materials, and the categorisation and politicisation of such.

The fact blues music as an industry category is not commercially appealing, is reason enough to suggest why contemporary musicians and their record label representatives embrace more popular labels such as rock and hip-hop. Whilst this chapter has both illustrated how artists reimagine the blues and how perceptions of the blues can be both constrained and expanded, the question of how a blues revival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be perceived to exist must also address those factors mentioned in this chapter that may impact on contemporary revivalists, namely nostalgia and emotion.

## **Chapter 8: Emotion & Revivalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, contemporary interpretations of the blues that may arise from revivalist activities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are contextualised in the broad sphere of popular culture using a range of theoretical perspectives in order to gain a more substantive overview of the blues. The primary aim of this work is to address both *how* and *why* a blues revival may be perceived to be taking place by addressing the concept of revivalism and the factors that may influence revivalist practices such as emotion and nostalgia. By highlighting the channels through which a blues revival may be experienced, the omnipresence of the blues in the lives of citizens native to the UK and the US is elucidated, leading to the assertion that such presence is increasing in significance due to a multitude of reasons, including how such communities reimagine blues artefacts and culture in transformations of tradition. It is argued that racial tension in contemporary US society is mirrored in cross-cultural engagement with the blues, enabled by aspects of globalisation and postmodern approaches to music production that leads to a continual reimagining of the music and culture as part of the selective tradition. It is also suggested that a postmodern platform provides the ideal context for the blues to ‘re-emerge’, whilst also illustrating why the blues has never vanished entirely. The chapter further demonstrates how in evoking the past metonymically through a reimagining of the blues, musicians wield considerable power in society.

Qualitative data drawn from transcripts of interviews conducted with curators of blues music in the UK representing the fields of radio broadcasting, live performance, print and online media, and music retail, provides the basis for the exploration of contemporary revivalism in this chapter. The methodological approach involved in the content and structure of the questions used in such interviews and the context of each discussion is

detailed in the introduction chapter. In each case where possible, a transcript of each interview is produced and analysed using descriptive coding with the following divisions:

- C = Category / Music Classification / Labelling
- V = Value (record collecting / of blues / includes commercial considerations)
- S = Stylistic reference (in classification)
- P = Perceptions of blues (cultural and/or musical)
- G = Globalisation (aspects of / impact of / location)
- R = Revivalism
- N = Nostalgia
- SP = Social Practice
- LE = Live Experience
- E = Emotion (including catharsis)

*Figure 16: Themes and codes used in the analysis of interview data*

Whilst some of the interview data overlaps with the previous chapter in for example aspects of the classification of music, other emergent themes yet to be addressed primarily form the structural basis for this chapter including emotion and revivalism (for theoretical and conceptual framework concerning tradition and revivalism, see chapter one, pp. 62-67). It should be apparent that such themes are not mutually exclusive and are drawn upon freely to complement the discursive nature of discourse contained herein. It is also deemed appropriate to contextualise revivalism and particularly the sources of revivalism in relation to previously discussed concepts and theories concerned with technological mediation and the impact this has on memory, nostalgia, and emotion.

## **Reviving, Reimagining, & Demarcating the Blues in the UK**

In the preceding chapters of this work the culminating results of the activities associated with pioneering folklorists, influential record collectors, and record label representatives

at various points in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is noted to have shaped subsequent perceptions of the blues genre through ideological discourse and mass-market capitalism that spurred a number of blues music revivals (for an overview of blues revivals, see pp. 5-6). Whilst a commercial revival akin to that triggered by the success of a string of critically well-received blues labelled albums in the 1980s and the early 1990s (chapter four, pp. 178-180) appears unlikely judging from both the quantitative data and perceptions of blues discussed in the last chapter, commercial sales figures alone do not, and as argued *can* not provide the full picture of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whilst a continuous reimagining of the blues by commercially successful contemporary popular music artists such as Beyoncé and Royal Blood may be perceived to transform and recontextualise the traditions of the past beyond a blues music categorisation (for example, see chapter seven, pp. 250-256), and record labels and representatives capitalise on other more commercially appealing stylistic labels, the blues remains omnipresent in the lives of many citizens in both the US and the UK, and is in fact gaining further significance for a multitude of reasons.

In the UK, one factor in this increase in gravity is the provision of a platform upon which up-and-coming artists can showcase their music and earn a living wage through increased exposure and networking opportunities as part of national and international competitions, which are closely affiliated with other globally distributed forms of print media that can potentially further enhance an act's musical profile. This platform is situated under the banner of blues and consists of a network of individuals that constitute what is proposed as a revival community. However, as Neil Rosenberg (1993), John Storey, (2003) and Tamara Livingston (1999; 2014) amongst many others have suggested, the use of the word revival is contested (see concepts of revivalism and musical communities, chapter one, pp. 62-67). Through the revival process, it is argued such a community is reimagining blues artefacts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in various ways and is empowered to do so through advances in digital technology.

In reviving cultural artefacts from the past, individuals shine a spotlight not only on that which is being revived but generate a synchronic sense which may be intrinsic or extrinsic to the object itself and in doing so provide a diachronic commentary on the cultural artefacts of the present. In other words, an individual may 'bring to life' for

example, audio recordings of the past to highlight differences, partly afforded in the ‘distance’ travelled, within present recordings in order to make a social statement. It is this ‘time depth’ that Livingston (1999) describes as the ‘centerpiece’ of all revivals (see chapter one, pp. 66-67). The proliferation of digitised artefacts of the past, and the more than ample historiographies associated with the blues enables a body of culture to be defined with relative ease, and such a body of culture has largely been historicised as being in opposition to the cultural mainstream, despite its commercial popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, providing a particularly sonorous platform for questioning contemporary sociocultural practices. This type of cultural appropriation perhaps suggests one reason as to the historical resistance to change exemplified in blues scholarship (for example, see pp. 17-19, 21-23), that is to say the power of the associated ideology manifested in such is worth protecting as Tia DeNora (2000) indicates ‘if music can affect the shape of social agency, then control over music in social settings is a source of social power; it is an opportunity to structure the parameters of action’ (DeNora, 2000, p. 20). Additionally, and as discussed in chapter two (pp. 116-122), a reimagining of the past may also evoke sentimental feelings in a yearning for times gone by. Therefore, nostalgia is a further motivation for revivalist activities.

The Independent Blues Broadcasters’ Association (IBBA) was created in 2013 by Paul Stiles, who has acted in an editorial capacity for *Blues in Britain* magazine since 2013 and has hosted the radio show *UK Blues Today* since 2010, and Martin Clarke who has presented *The Blues Session* since 2008 and *The Roots Collective* radio show, established in 2016. The main aims of the IBBA are clearly displayed on the website:

1. To provide a united body of presenters and in doing so gain greater influence with promoters, record labels and artists.
2. The selection and promotion of an ‘Album of the month’ so that each member agrees to play at least one track from that album on each show during that month.
3. To promote blues shows presented by IBBA members by supplying time/day and how to listen [*sic*] information by means of a weekly schedule.

4. Contact page so that promoters, record labels and artists can contact members of the Association with their promotional material and tracks.
5. Contact details so all IBBA members can contact each other.
6. To encourage members to promote shows presented by other IBBA members.
7. The sharing of information and ideas.
8. To support, encourage and promote blues music across the UK. (IBBA, 2018a).

This revivalist ideology shared by the 53 members of the IBBA illustrates how the power of music as a resource for ‘world building’ (DeNora, 2000, p. 44) may be harnessed in gaining ‘greater influence with promoters, record labels and artists’ in a collective capacity to ‘encourage and promote blues music across the UK’. The broadcast of over one hundred hours of blues music each week on local radio stations and in a global capacity via the internet provides the means with which these aims may be achieved. Similarly to previous blues revivals (for example, see chapter one, p. 65) the IBBA network of radio shows predominantly consist of sound recordings and occasional artist interviews.

As noted above, artist promoters and the musicians they represent have a potential financial interest in which sound recordings are broadcast as host of *Digital Blues* and Chair of the UK Blues Federation Ashwyn Smith explains during an interview ‘I return my playlists to the roots music playlist organisation in America and they pull together all the playlists from around the world...if a particular track is played by a hundred and fifty different DJs then that will go quite high in the chart’ (A Smith 2018, personal communication, 8 March). The Roots Music Report (RMR) referred to here compiles playlist submissions into both album and singles charts viewable by genre or sub-genre. What is interesting to note is that songs and albums labelled as belonging to the sub-genre of blues-rock appear within the blues genre chart but do not appear within the rock genre chart as one might expect (RMR, 2018).

Returning to the IBBA and the *Top 40 Artists Played in 2017* (IBBA, 2018b), a number of blues musicians from the past are included such as John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, and B.B. King, but the majority of artists are very much alive and actively recording and touring. It is suggested that what is additionally revived by the members of the IBBA is

the ideology of authenticity associated with the blues recordings of the past (for example, for record collecting and folkloristic activity, see chapter two, pp. 116-122, and for a sense of place and authenticity see chapter three, pp. 144-150).

There are a lot of people now playing blues in an authentic style in my opinion and if I had to choose a particular style of blues that I would like to listen to that's it. I love listening to the people who play modern songs, modern music but in a style that perhaps is quite old-fashioned (A Smith 2018, personal communication, 8 March).

Additionally, and in contrast to those artists signed to large record companies, the touring musicians on the IBBA list are reimagining the blues through embracement of blues labels which enable them to take part in the ever-increasing number of blues-titled festivals and competitions, receiving valuable airplay in the shows broadcast by the network of blues revivalists, as Dave Hill suggests 'I do think there are bands, I don't really want to name them, but basically they are doing the blues circuit because they can earn a good living doing that but they would just as easily be a rock band' (D Hill 2018, personal communication, 19 April). The network of negotiation that exists between the members of the IBBA, promotional agents, performers, and live event organisers wherein new aesthetic codes and customs are created in agreement with revivalist ideology results in the reimagining of the blues as a genre and stylistic category in a contemporary context through the creation of a new musical system as members of the network, to paraphrase Rosenberg (1993) slightly, 'transform the tradition'.

To a certain extent there is acknowledgement that such transformations take place in revivalist practices such as the running of the *UK Blues Awards* facilitated by the UK Blues Federation and within which one of the seventeen awards categories, *Innovation in the Blues in the UK* recognises individuals or groups who have 'breathed new breath into the blues, introduced something new and fresh and/or successfully pushed the genre's boundaries in the UK' (UK Blues Federation, 2017). In this, its inaugural year of operation, the nomination panel for the *UK Blues Awards* declared the commercially

successful singer-songwriter Rory Graham aka Rag 'n' Bone Man as the deserving winner of the innovation award, a performer previously referred to in the UK music press as a '21<sup>st</sup> century blues man' (MacBain, 2017). The aims of the UK Blues Federation, created in 2015, echo those of the IBBA in promoting and encouraging blues in the UK and as a member of the European Blues Union (EBU) also organises the *UK Blues Challenge*, wherein a panel of 600 people are invited to nominate a blues act, with the top four most nominated acts competing against each other in a final performance. As part of the event, a panel of judges mark the finalists on five categories including 'blues content, vocal talent, instrumental talent, originality and stage presence' (Cavern Club, 2017), with the declared winner proceeding to represent the UK at the *European Blues Challenge* as organised by the EBU. As an affiliate of the Blues Foundation in the US, the UK Blues Federation also submits the winner of its national competition as an entrant to the annual *International Blues Challenge* held in Memphis, Tennessee. Whilst it is clear that entrants to the UK blues competition can gain potentially valuable exposure and networking opportunities, innovative acts that 'push the genre's boundaries' could be penalised in not meeting the criteria of 'blues content' depending on the weighting of the five marked categories. Conversely, and again depending on the weighting, a talented non-blues act could potentially win the *UK Blues Challenge* on the grounds of a perceived originality. As the federation acknowledge in their own rules for nominations for the *UK Blues Awards*, 'any attempt to define this genre will always be a matter of opinion, individual taste and something of an ever moving target' (UK Blues Federation, 2017). It follows then, that the winners of the *UK Blues Challenge*, and not unlike most other competitions in which art is judged, are subject to the tastes and personal preferences of each panel member. Furthermore, it is suggested that in order to be successful, entrants must navigate the reanimated ideologies of the past that are intrinsically part of the revivalist environment, including notions of blues authenticity, within which they perform.

## Emotion

I wanted to show exactly what Negro life in the South means today, the total effect, a kind of common denominator. I've used what I've lived and observed and felt and I've used my imagination to whip it into shape to appeal to the emotions and imaginations of other people, for I believe that only the writing that has to do with the basic issues of human living, moral, political or whatever you call it, has any meaning. I think the importance of any writing lies in how much felt life is in it: It gets its value from that (Wright cited in Kinnamon & Fabre, 1993, p. 4).

Taken from an interview given to the New York Post in 1938, African-American author Richard Wright highlights the importance of injecting a 'feeling' of life into his writing in order to convey meaningful expression, whilst utilising the power of imagination in striving for cross-cultural reception through the arousal of emotion. As indicated throughout this thesis, the blues is largely characterised by both its emotional expressiveness and its power to arouse emotion through a reimagining of traditional elements. In the context of revivalism, it is suggested that the induction of emotion, more than any other factor, plays a key role in a reimagining of the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In *Music and mind in everyday life* Eric Clarke, Nicola Dibben, and Stephanie Pitts (2010) build on the work of music psychologist Patrik N. Juslin (2009) to identify six main mechanisms of emotion induction, including emotional contagion, evaluative conditioning and episodic memory (Clarke, Dibben & Pitts, 2010, pp. 83-86). Emotion induction simply refers to the interactions between an organism and environment, and that as auditory information in a perceiver's environment music is just as likely to trigger an emotional response as much as other sounds encountered that signal information important to human survival.

The second way in which music may afford a response is through 'emotional contagion' in which a listener perceives a performer's emotion and 'mimics' this expression internally. As an expression of everyday life blues music has great potential for such

internalisation and subsequent catharsis. In compiling playlists for *The Blues Show* radio host and musician Gary Grainger broadcasts those songs that ‘speak to him’ emphasising the importance of emotion and feeling in ‘authentic’ blues performances whilst highlighting how the lyrical content of songs such as *Big Boss Man*, recorded by Jimmy Reed in 1960, and performed in his own live sets, gained increasing emotional resonance in the course of his own everyday life experiences that led to resentment towards an employer (G Grainger 2018, personal communication, 13 March).

Thirdly, ‘evaluative conditioning’ refers to the retriggering of an emotional response, through the same music that had occurred in synchronisation with another positive or negative event that induced the initial emotional response. Alan Pearce stresses the importance of music as therapy in relaying how ‘music saved his life when he was dying from cancer’ as nurses were surprised to find him twitching his fingers and toes to the music his family and friends had brought in for him to listen to as he began his recovery (A Pearce 2018, personal communication, 13 April). Clarke (2005) argues that the perception of motion is not only ‘a fundamental aspect of music’s impact and meaning’ but that it is ‘an inevitable consequence of the event-detecting nature of the human auditory system’ (Clarke, 2005, pp. 63-64). In this example, therefore, the meaning of music triggers a physiological response and an emotional response, which is partly induced through feelings of nostalgia. These meanings subsequently take on greater significance in conjunction with the occurrence of a positive event in the individual’s life, as additional layers of meaning are then perceived in a fragment of a song, complete track, or a music collection.

The fourth mechanism of emotion induction, closely related to the last, relates to ‘episodic memory’ in which music evokes a memory of an event which brings the emotional reaction to that memory. In ‘stretching the boundaries of blues’ on *Digital Blues* Ashwyn Smith has broadcast *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* from the Gluck opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* first performed in 1762 as it is ‘absolutely full of the spirit of blues’ and in pointing to this example, subsequently indicates that the piece was performed at his mother’s funeral in the previous year (A Smith 2018, personal communication, 8 March). The playing of the classical piece then has the potential to bring with it the emotional reaction to the event and remembrance of a close family

member. However, the distinction in this mechanism from the last is that a piece may not have been played at the same time the emotional event occurred, and as a cultural form that communicates fundamental truths about the human condition, the content of the blues makes it a wellspring for the induction of emotion through episodic memory.

The association of musical elements with specific meanings due to their history of use also enables ‘semantic meaning’ to induce emotion and is largely dependent on the context of listening and the disposition of a listener in addition to the manner with which materials have been perceived to have been used by musicians over time and as Clarke, Dibben and Pitts (2010) argue in highlighting the affordances of music, central to ecological psychology, ‘music does not have to have a specific meaning but has the potential for particular meanings to emerge given particular circumstances’ (Clarke, Dibben & Pitts, 2010, p. 75). Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2014; 1999) has suggested that such ‘indices’ are signs of experience and emotion and are constitutive of identity. The blues revivalists of the IBBA predominately share the collective experiences of 1960s counterculture as part of the post-World War II baby boom generation and so such indexical signs, that Tagg (2012) refers to as ‘style flags’, provide the common ground for blues revivalism (for theories and concepts relating to indices see chapter one, pp. 58-59). The ‘seduction’ of ‘Afro-American music’ such as the blues and hip-hop to white audiences as ‘countercultural practice’ (West, 1999; Rose, 1994; 2008; Samuels, 2004) has also been previously noted (see pp. 17-23 and chapter one, pp. 50-51)

The final mechanism is that of ‘arousal response’ in which a listener’s expectations are either met or thwarted prompting an emotional response. Leonard B. Meyer was one of the first music theorists to address the effects of musical expectancy through the development of an analytical method based on Gestalt psychology that identified patterns of implication/expectation in tonal music (Meyer, 1956, p. 31). Whilst the blues is often characterised as repetitive, various studies including those by Van der Merwe (1992), Evans (2000), and Simon (2013) illustrate how musical and lyrical variation found in recordings of blues performances in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century played with listener expectations, but we may also still experience ‘affect’ even if we know a recording well

(Robinson, 2005, p. 365). Therefore, all forms of music have the potential to affect individual listeners in multiple ways through this mechanism, and as a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century development, blues music has been affecting listeners in this way for well over a century. In elucidating how the mechanisms of emotion induction may affect participants who engage in revivalist activity it should be further clear how a contemporary reimagining of the blues is achieved through a reimagining of the past and that it is not simply concerned with a music form as autonomous objects, as the blues could never realistically be viewed in this way, but with both the expression and arousal of emotion that are felt depending on the salience of the cultural artefacts being revived. Accordingly, the context of reception, as is to an extent controlled by the revivalists and associated activities, can shape the emotional effects of indices that are inherent in such practices.

The perceptions of blues music in contemporary revivalism can be seen to contrast with how blues music is interpreted by black Americans residing in historically significant areas such as Mississippi. This is firstly due to the obvious fact that it is not presumed that the average US citizen is engaged in any sort of revivalist activities, and it should be emphasised that blues music in the preceding sentence refers to the stereotypical 20<sup>th</sup> century definition of blues (see, pp. 39-40).

Brian B. Foster's (2017) recent sociological study on the black Delta community in Clarksdale can be seen to illustrate many of these areas of contrast which impact on how both an expression and an arousal of emotion in blues music are understood in a different context. Despite the suggestion that blues festivals function as sites of racial harmony through increasing integration (King, 2004), such festivals are seldom attended by black residents of Clarksdale, in fact many members of the community are dismissive of the blues performed at these events and only occasionally engage with such for the peripheral attractions to keep their children entertained for the day. Many black Mississippians in Foster's study also suggested there is blues 'overkill' with a little-to-no economic benefit for an area that hosts twenty-four blues festivals per year. Blues music was found to be of little interest to the younger residents and not much more than a soundtrack to cleaning the house on a Saturday morning at the insistence of parents, a time in which the passing down of family stories is often performed (B Foster, 2018, personal communication, 27

April). Yet the ‘pillar of African American identity’ referred to as the ‘blues epistemology’ (Woods, 1998, p. 29), provides the foundation in Foster’s two-year ethnographic study for revealing how the blues is variably reimagined as an ‘environment of social memory, site of racial meaning and experience, and arena of regional futurism’ as the ‘black residents of Clarksdale imbue the blues with social, cultural, and historical, as well as aesthetic, meaning’ (Foster, 2017, pp. iii, 5). Consequently, the blues as both a stylistic music market category and as cultural expression are continually reimagined for different purposes wherein the blues dually induces emotion and is permeated with emotional meaning. Whilst the blues is not always explicitly considered in Afrofuturist discourse, it has been presented as a ‘black secret technology’ in films about the blues and its icons such as Robert Johnson (Steinskog, 2018, pp. 28, 37), and as demonstrated in chapter four (p. 170) the blues has been central to the pioneering ‘afrosonics’ of African American performers in the past such as Jimi Hendrix (Gilroy, 2010; Van Veen, 2016). The perpetual ownership argument *of* the blues (see chapter one, pp. 50-51) is brought to the fore *in* the blues as reimagined by musicians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as links to the cultural past are strongly evident in matters of economics contested in the arena of popular music (see Neal, 2002, Rose, 2008; 1994 in chapter one, pp. 55). In the context of revivalism, this further indicates why the blues has never entirely vanished and remains omnipresent. It also illustrates how complex interactions of personality traits, ethnographic make-up, and musical selection impact on communication of emotional meaning in music, as sonic and gestural icons are amplified and recontextualised in contemporary multimedia forms.

## **Metonymy**

As demonstrated in the last chapter, the act of remembering is a selective process and whilst there can be no doubting the mental images that enable individuals to remember, in a postmodern age where the relationship between the past and present is complicated by the impact of mass mediation, as clearly exemplified in the work of Patricia Schroeder (2004) and Alison Landsberg (2004), it is the origin of such memories that is very much

cast in to doubt. This is significant when discussing a genre which has been historically characterised by the perceived authenticity of the cultural artefacts and performers associated with such, in comparison to other popular music forms. An imaginative fusion based on potentially ‘false’ memories may give rise not only to the cultural artefact in the first place but shape the way in which the artefact is perceived. As the case of Robert Johnson so greatly exemplifies, the representation of the past is not the *real* past but is comprised of myths and stereotypes *about* the past. So when we *hear* the expressions of emotion in songs such as *Hell Hound on My Trail* it is a mass-mediated interpretation of which inhibits any attempt one may wish to enact in replicating a perceived authenticity in performance. Whilst the results of contemporary popular music creative practices are perceived to be increasingly suffuse with hybrid elements, as in the mixing of hip-hop, blues, and world music, the view that such amalgamations illustrate ‘a symbolic comeback to the idea of Africa as an original homeland that fits in the ambiguously celebratory context of multiculturalism’ (Pedro-Carañana, 2016, p. 98), appears to be somewhat of a unilateral one. Hybrid forms may be perceived to be symbols of cultural appropriation whilst also demonstrating an irreverence that dismisses the potential conflicts of the utilised artefacts’ contexts. In decontextualising particular aspects of blues from the social and historical context, there is also a perception of a desire for limited contact with the African-American culture that nurtured it. Foster refers to the appropriation of blues culture as merely a ‘hollow shell’ suggesting that a sense of history is lost in the use of blues music for social purposes without an understanding of the sociological aspects that constitute it, whilst also indicating that white blues fans in the US are generally uninterested in exploring the potential of blues music as a tool for racial progress (B Foster 2018, personal communication, 27 April).

In a chapter on the indie folk genre, Claire Coleman (2017) refers to how singer-songwriters are definitively influenced by nostalgia for an imagined past and ‘insert reconstructed nostalgic pasts into the current moment as substitutes for reality and as objects of longing’ (Coleman, 2017, p. 224). As ethnomusicological studies have shown (for example, see Montero-Diaz, 2017; Lind, 2011; Emoff, 2002) such processes are not constrained to any one particular place, as parallels can be drawn with nostalgic

transformations in geographically disparate locations across the world. In his characterisation of simulations, French cultural theorist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1983) suggests ‘when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning’ (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 12). However, in this mode of ‘hyperrealism’ the ‘real’ and simulation are experienced without difference (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 2), and so emotion may just as easily be expressed and/or induced, if not more so, through simulacra. Therefore, in evoking the past metonymically through a reimagining of the blues, musicians wield considerable power when selecting only the most desirable, tried-and-tested elements of over a century’s worth of intertextual and interphonographic practice with deep cultural and historical significance. The power of nostalgia also ensures that ‘knowing *bricoleurs*’ take pleasure in listening, in a postmodern era in which historical details surrounding the development of the music are more widely available and easier to access, as noted in the previous chapter. The importance of the distinction between the real and the imaginary then is observed to be disintegrating but such importance is variable, as demonstrated within the arguments from perceptual relativity, that is to say in any single example wherein one cultural artefact is experienced by more than one individual, entirely different perceptual experiences may be generated, despite the potential that all perceivers are aware they are engaging with a simulacrum.

## **Resistance & Reaction**

In the context of this chapter, blues music historiography and revivalism exemplifies how the selective tradition, as defined by Raymond Williams (2009) and presented in chapter one (see levels of culture, pp. 62-63), operates in the cultural sphere as the particular interests of the revivalists inform the tradition, and these interests are dependent on the social and historical contexts within which they are articulated.

The interests and values manifest in arguments over factors such as instrumentation (for example, see chapter four, pp. 163-164) and which may collectively characterise blues music style, exist on the level of recorded culture. Debates surrounding cultural identity and ownership (for example, see pp. 11-13) are mostly connected with the level of living

culture. Using art critic Hal Foster's (1985) terminology (see chapter one, p. 64), the popular music producers of the songs analysed in the last chapter, illustrate a postmodernism of resistance in reimagining the blues through a critique of origin in embracing contradictions that afford multiple meanings. The music is not autonomous but relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts and as a result, reveals political affiliations (for politics and music, see chapter two, pp. 85-126). The myriad of evolving music styles in contemporary popular music is indicative of the incredulity shown towards metanarratives in celebrating pluralism and fragmentation and within which there are perceived to be no culturally dominant set of values. As discussed throughout chapter two, the blues has been constructed on notions of difference and in all forms of reimagining the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century expressed in this thesis, it is suggested that what could be viewed as the cultural dominant of postmodernism provides the ideal context for the blues to re-emerge. Historically symbolic of difference, blues music in this context enables individuals and collective groups to make sense of the world. On this basis, it is argued that the continual reimagining of the blues is emblematic of racial tension in society, as a potential 'tool' for racial progress that is unused in the United States but which in all levels of culture reflects how the world is constructed. The reflection of cultural tension may also be perceived in a reimagining of the blues through the selection and use of cultural materials that are noted to exemplify repetition and a sameness that contests pluralist practice and challenges the multiplicity of meanings, in the selective tradition, reanimating arguments of cultural ownership and appropriation. The relative ease with which past traditions may be reimagined in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (for example, see chapter four, pp. 155-188 and also Hilder, Stobart, and Tan, 2017; Whiteley and Rambarran, 2016) leads to cultural relativism that dilutes the critical value and voice of culture, amplifying existing tensions and giving rise to new tensions concerned with cultural identity in society.

The generation of new forms of cultural hybridity, which emerge in an ever-decreasing social space and enabled through globalisation, precipitate conflicts arising from the pluralism of meaning-making of the world in which humankind resides. In this context, popular culture is a site of struggle wherein the powerless resist hegemonic forces of homogeneity in a 'semiotic battlefield' wherein imposed meanings and social identities

from above are resisted by the heterogeneity of the powerless through meanings and identities brought into sharp focus by such acts of resistance. The epoch of blues music is understood to have occurred outside of the period within which such semiotic practices became contested in the commodification of music, and in its origins as a folk form, has been constructed in opposition to the hegemonic practices of the music industry. Therefore, the blues as a musical index is certainly a symbol of resistance in multiple contexts and engagement with the blues as an expressive and emotive cultural form in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is emblematic of tensions in a society concerned with concepts of cultural hybridity and globalisation. Through indexical signs of emotion and experience that carry great cultural weight, engagement with the blues as either a music producer, performer, curator, and/or listener results in multilayered concepts of what the blues is which becomes an additional point of contestation in the semiotic battlefield of popular culture (for perceptions of authenticity, see chapter one, pp. 51-56, and for parallels with styles such as hip-hop, see pp. 19-20). As an efficient signal in transferring emotional messages, the polyvalent character of blues music suggests how a number of non-mirroring responses are afforded in how the blues is continually reimagined and as Turino (1999) suggests ‘musical indices...are “really” attached to events and aspects of our lives, and hence are *experienced* as real; they are signs *of* our lives, not signs about them’ (Turino, 1999, p. 236, italics in original).

In the context of popular music, the romanticism associated with a postmodernism of reaction can be characterised by the work of blues revivalists who seek to preserve the ideologies of the past in reanimating blues recordings not only from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but those of the 1950s and 1960s (see overview of revivals, pp. 5-6, prominent debates, pp. 16-24, and blues typology, p. 155). Nostalgia is emblematic of a postmodernism of reaction in reviving traditional themes and motifs through rose-coloured glasses, yet such a yearning for the past could be viewed as ‘antimodernist’ rather than postmodernist as it may be perceived to actually oppose certain elements of postmodernism such as anti-elitism and instead preserve the eroding boundary between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture (Kramer, 2002, p. 13). As a popular cultural form such a distinction at first may not be appropriate, but in an age of ‘unprecedented pluralism’

wherein *'fake* products exist to disguise the hyperreality of the others' (Brackett, 2002, p. 223, italics in original), such a distinction maybe valid as blues culture and blues music is constructed as authentic in the face of what shall be called '*X-Factor* culture' which includes the publication of manuals on how to win the televised singing competition by crying during auditions, talking in clichés, giving the impression of being a 'grafter' and using 'sob stories' (Bolger, 2009). In light of commercially successful songs such as *Freedom* and *Formation* by Beyoncé within which it is argued black culture *is* prioritised, it is difficult to consider such as being unreflective of black practice despite its place in the commodity system, as Tricia Rose (1994; 2008) and many hip-hop scholars (Forman, 2002; Judy, 2012; McLeod, 2012) have previously suggested (see, pp. 19-20 and chapter one, p. 55). The 'appropriation-revitalisation process' Charles Keil (1991, p. 43) refers to wherein each successive African-American music style emphasises African elements in response to the appropriation and commercialisation of a preceding black cultural form by white popular musicians, is at the very least complicated and at most rendered obsolete by the vast successive forms of cultural hybridity afforded through globalisation processes. The point is tension in US society is reflected in the cross-cultural reimagining of the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through engagement with a commodified black cultural form that through emotion and nostalgia is highly valued not only by those on the level of a lived culture but by participants in recorded culture. Therefore there is almost inevitably tension in the use of fragments on the level of selective tradition brought to the fore in a postmodernist perspective that emphasises how such fragments of the past are reimagined in more ways than has ever been previously possible.



## **Conclusion**

This thesis had the aim of revealing and exploring the sociocultural and musicological concepts and relationships that contribute to a contemporary understanding of blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The central research question related to this aim was defined as to what extent does the blues have links to its cultural past? In fulfilment of this aim the primary objectives were to: define sociological and musicological factors contributing to the production, dissemination, and consumption of the blues; evaluate notions of blues authenticity and the relationships of such with cultural identity; and conceptualise the impact of schizophrenic practices and explicit expressions of hybridity in popular music artefacts. I will now recapitulate the main findings and implications of the thesis, in relation to previous studies where appropriate, whilst indicating the contributions made to the literature on blues music and popular music culture, and make recommendations for future research.

If the collective criteria that constitute an authentic blues performer, as conceptualised by the folklorists and record collectors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see, chapter two, pp. 116-122), is followed such a figure could not exist in 2018. The ‘real’ bluesman could only exist in fiction as referenced continually by appropriators who fail to meet one or more of the authenticity criteria. Despite the chronological distance, contemporary popular music is rooted in the creolisation of culture that occurred as a result of the uprooting of slaves to the Americas from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Cultural theorist Peter Burke (2009) refers to a creolisation of the world as a scenario in which there is a period of crystallisation defined as ‘a relatively fluid period of cultural exchange followed by solidification’ that turns into routine whilst resisting subsequent change (Burke, 2009, p. 114). This resistance to the further construction or reconstruction of tradition typifies not only the efforts of those folklorists such as John Lomax and Dorothy Scarborough who sought specific cultural forms based on highly restrictive criteria but also typifies consumer culture in general. The values placed on cultural artefacts in such context are threatened by impending change and as sociologist Howard Becker (1982) suggests ‘an attack on a convention attacks the aesthetic related to it’ and ‘since people experience their aesthetic beliefs as

natural, proper, and moral, an attack on a convention and its aesthetic also attacks a morality' (Becker, 1982, p. 305). The link between aesthetics and morality underpins the heated exchanges amongst and between the folklorists and record collectors in the perpetual arguments over what constituted real blues in the 20<sup>th</sup> century whilst such discourse subsequently became increasingly apparent in the mass marketing of black cultural artefacts to white consumer groups. The overriding point is that blues scholars have historically argued over what is both a hybrid and homogenised form of music; hybrid in the creolisation of its origins on American soil, and homogenised through global mass-market dissemination. Blues folklorists, in particular, searched for music in a culture in which no 'pure' forms existed and by contesting the features of what comprised authentic blues music, writers and commentators have somewhat ironically published articles, books, and journals that have contributed to the increasing globalisation of that which they aimed to capture and retain in a most natural state outside of the industry to which they made such contributions. The conceptual framework advocated in this thesis enables the ideology of authenticity manifest in the demarcation of blues-marketed music of the past to be pinpointed, challenged, and displaced in order to avoid sociocultural and musicological stereotypes that are embedded thematically in blues historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that have severely restricted the perceived development of the blues as both a music style and genre.

The interdisciplinary approach adopted in chapter two afforded the identification and exploration of emergent and changing relationships between African-American experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, popular music, and the legacy of slavery. The findings illustrated that the blues is both constituted within and reflective of rural, urban, and suburban environments and is rooted in the past as the origin of consciousness of black Americans. As such it represents the past at the intersection with the present and future for African-American experience as reflected in black music. Although it is representative of an African-American experience it is not truly emblematic of black identity, yet may be powerfully drawn upon in expression of such in the intersection of music and politics, reflecting cultural memory and diaspora consciousness. The blues can be considered as least representative of blackness amongst subsequent black cultural

forms such as soul and hip-hop, yet this does not mean it is more representative of a 'whiteness'. It is historically both a musical style and genre, and exists as a product of cultural hybridity, an African-American tradition demarcated and 'invented' in the music industry largely by white enthusiasts drawn to both its emotional directness and to an extent, its encapsulation and portrayal of biracial cultural memory.

This study contributes to an understanding of the development of the blues in suggesting and exploring relationships between processes of technological mediation and cultural identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as they relate to blues music. The increasing availability and accessibility of both communication and creative technologies has empowered individuals to engage more deeply and frequently with cultural memory through the proliferation of online media that enables identity construction. Increasing artistic control and ownership over cultural art forms, which had been previously heavily constrained both in the manner such artefacts were produced and the way in which they were presented to the public commercially, has also resulted from advances in digital technologies that underpin contemporary creative tools and Afrofuturist visions. The implication here is that globalisation affords the closer alignment of blues music with a black identity, as musicians including global pop performers such as Beyoncé and Pharrell Williams or blues-marketed musicians (see pp. 4-5) including Gary Clark Jr and Shemekia Copeland may draw upon the blues as a representation of a lived experience with increasing autonomy. Such aspects of globalisation also enable increasing participation in the blues as a genre from white musicians, who may be drawn to the universality of lyrical themes, and/or emotive qualities expressed in historical recordings and filmed footage that constitute the formulation of mediatised memories.

Consequently, the multifaceted dimensions of blues music that attract cross-racial interest and broadening participation operate on a 21<sup>st</sup>-century platform that dually increases both the global hybridity and a perceived blackness of the African-American tradition, as notions of authenticity are restructured in the passing of time and continuous deferment of the past. As new forms of global identity emerge, replacing traditional sources that have been continually eroded by the economic impacts of globalisation and which were once sustained by local and national industries, ideas and terms relating to freedom,

welfare, rights, representation, and democracy are brought into sharp focus. Such concerns have almost inevitably increased the politicisation of cultural forms such as music, and as discussed in chapter two, the intertwining links between politics and the blues run deep. In essence, as the effects of globalisation are increasingly felt through such cultural flows, the importance of the blues as a traditional, direct, and relatively uncomplicated outlet for human expression and emotion is also augmented, perhaps explaining the longevity of blues music, and its continued revival as it is reimagined in a multitude of hybrid forms.

A key question in chapter three centred on the contribution a sense of place makes in the perceived origins of the blues. The varying standpoints presented herein represent some of the key ontological arguments concerned with tradition in the roots of blues music history that most clearly represent ongoing discourses of musicological and ethnomusicological research, and the complexity in ascribing blues characteristics to a particular origin and chronological location. History has shown that the sharing of musical ideas often leads to the development of new styles and genres, as lyrics and musical figures are reimagined in accordance with an individual's sociocultural background, resulting in both the transmission of new meanings and the reinterpretation of old traditions, as exemplified by the blues. The findings here suggest the components of style that characterise blues music existed long before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in unrecorded performances and compositions created on American soil, as similarities in African-American and Anglo-American traditions add credence to the view that cross-cultural exchange took place within the 19<sup>th</sup> century with great frequency.

There is clearly much inconsistency in how blues music artefacts are stylistically categorised, and the use of place in such processes is certainly not always useful as stylistic differences may be perceived to be minimal. More generally, the period within which such a label is applied will often be most relevant at that time and is of course largely dependent on who is performing such labelling and for what purpose. This study has offered a fresh interpretation of the relevancy of music categorisation processes as they relate to blues music and how they may be meaningful in different contexts. The engagement of global audiences in the demarcation of music genre and associated styles

complicates the process of categorisation as notions of cultural value related to the locality of music consumers are brought into an international context. As the music industry aims to keep up-to-date with emergent themes in society that influence conceptions of music genre, increasing artist and audience engagement in music categorisation through processes of globalisation results in continually shifting conceptions of popular music forms. Music genre as a reflection of such engagement then should be perceivably fluid but as noted throughout, in blues-marketed music (see pp. 4-5) this is clearly not the case. The expression of aesthetic values linked to an increasingly diverse consumer group is met with resistance both by a pre-existing consumer group, who may hold contrasting aesthetic beliefs, and in the reluctance of music industry professionals to accommodate such changes in the name of capitalism.

This study has suggested new relationships between the affordances of the Internet and the development of blues music that has been underexplored in academia, whilst additionally highlighting complications in the associative links between a sense of place, cultural identity, and blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as parallels are drawn with studies in hip-hop and world music. The increasing implementation of communication technology and its influence on cultures in even the remotest of locations indicates that place may no longer be regarded as important in the development of music styles, although a generative sense of place may be utilised to meet listener expectations in the continuous creation of culturally hybrid artefacts. The immediacy of such technology can also erode local identity as the global distribution of music may be performed with a few clicks of a computer mouse and without any localised engagement and/or feedback that may contribute to both the environmental characteristics of a live performance and song development in the maintenance of a repertoire. Whilst a sense of place is a recurring theme in African-American music, the representation of place within music styles can not be without question interpreted to originate from any one particular location due to both advancements in technology and the effects of the African diaspora. If one were to try and find an authentic blues performer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is suggested that the first place one would look would be on the Internet, indicating how technological development may be perceived to lead to cultural homogenisation. John Hammond's ideological search for

authentic musicians demonstrates the perceived association between culture and a musical identity that still exists in the commercialisation of blues music today and which may be exemplified in the actions of the tourist industry that are also deemed indicative of the relationship between a sense of place and perceptions of authenticity. Yet, the demographical displacement that has occurred throughout history has been ignored by those who strongly associate musical style with a location, suggesting an underappreciated view of the role such displacement has on the process of forming a cultural identity, or a reluctance to relinquish ownership of cultural artefacts historically associated with a specific place.

Whilst the sociological meaning in blues music may have been perceivably diluted in the cultural exchange that followed the Civil Rights era, popular music associated with African-American communities remains a powerful form of expression in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The associations between geographical location and music style may appear to be galvanised through the sociological context in which interrelations are presented, as exemplified in the engagement of African-American musicians in social activist groups such as Ferguson Action. The social-historical relationship of the blues and geographical location means that such music may be powerfully drawn upon in such a contemporary context or inferred in its relationship to an oppressed lived experience of the past. Such links may be strengthened further through community interaction in online social media channels, as the number of global participants within such groups increases through communication technology. It is maintained that the extent of these interrelations may only be revealed through an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of popular music artefacts, as advocated in this thesis.

Findings related to the role technology has played in the production and development of blues music culture show how the generation of blues performers who electrified their music including Muddy Waters, Elmore James, John Lee Hooker, Albert King, and B.B. King embraced the change and opportunity brought about by advances in technology that distinguished them from the previous generation of performers who pioneered the acoustic Delta blues style such as Charley Patton, Son House, and Tommy Johnson. The negotiation between the received traditions of the past and the futurism exemplified in the

harnessing of technologies related to performance, listening, and recording not only characterises the development of blues music, but in the essentialism of African-American music writers and critics such as Nelson George (2003) and Tricia Rose (2008; 1994), broadly characterises black music. Accepting the continuously shifting nature of the environment from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day and within which technology including instruments and other sound sources is a part, and that commercial interests, not perceived musical differences, have historically led to the recategorisation of popular music styles, the findings afforded through an all-encompassing analytical approach strengthen the implication of Wald's (2004) findings that suggests many contemporary popular music performers categorised as R&B, rock, soul, funk, or hip-hop may be considered as blues artists. In addition to suggesting new relationships in the processes that connect a 21<sup>st</sup>-century performer to the cultural identity of a listener, this thesis also clearly shows how an ideology of authenticity is manifested in music production technology and provides new insights into the relationship between creative decision-making and the traditions of the past. The underproduced aesthetic widely perceived to characterise blues music recordings reflects only the quality of technology available in the immediate environment at the time, and the constant equation of such a sound aesthetic with a realness or authenticity is the result of the constraints imposed on blues music culture through ideologies within the recording industry. As mentioned previously (p. 297) popular music performers continually reimagine the blues through new technologies which have become increasingly accessible to amateur and professional musicians. These new technologies enable musicians to make a decision in whether to conform to older traditions through for example retro and equipment modelling technology or adopt contemporary sounds that directly reflect the perceptual sources in the environment and with which an overproduced sound aesthetic may be achieved. The incorporation of concepts into the framework such as prosthetic memory, as proposed by Landsberg (2004), successfully illustrates the complexities and mechanisms of cultural experience in relation to blues music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The globalisation of blues-marketed music has brought an ever-increasingly broad audience and cross-cultural engagement with the genre through technologies such as the Internet which has provided a cultural loop of reimagination within which blues sources may be consumed, artistic

ideas are developed and refined, and then reimagined artefacts are uploaded onto the same platform for other users to explore and provide feedback. The cultural experiences of the past, which may be accessed through such technology, impacts on cultural identity in the present as musicians and consumers find new ways in which to respond to the challenges posed in the total environment.

A more encompassing interdisciplinary analysis enables the identification of sound objects in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that reflects the broader world, as defined by a postmodern paradigm. Through analysis of instrumentation, performance, and recording processes it is possible to trace strong links to the traditions of the past in contemporary music production practices. In chapter five these links emerge in the use of minimal instrumentation, slide guitar technique, harmonica parts, homemade stringed instruments, impromptu changes in tempo and form, a ragged approach to vocal pitch and timbre, and an adherence to tube amplification and analogue recording technologies. The utilisation of Moore's (2002) model of authenticity classification in the context of this study enables the impact of authenticity in contemporary production and consumption processes to be gauged in relation to the past. The findings are indicative of how contemporary musicians show a postmodern awareness of perceptions of authenticity and a degree of calculation in how to navigate such in the promotion of perceivably honest aesthetic qualities on and off the stage, as musicians admit to tricking young listeners in order to remain perceivably contemporary and relevant. The argument of intertextuality that suggests the importance lies in the *appearance* of how real a cultural artefact is perceived to be rather than how original a work *is*, may be supported by these findings and linked to changing notions of authenticity in the cultural sphere of popular music. Pressures of blues authenticity in the demarcation of sociocultural boundaries is found to impact on the creative decision-making of musicians who engage with the traditions of the past to the point that they may abandon the blues as a style altogether, and such findings are congruent with the view that such notions have distorted perceptions of blues music (Rudinow, 1994; Weisethaunet & Lindberg, 2010). Professional and non-professional consumer reviews for blues artefacts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are found to seldom make reference to blues musicians from the past that may be cited in album recordings through

cover versions and dedications, yet the evidence suggests they are *experienced* as authentic by younger listeners. These findings may be contrasted with the response of older professional musicians who are disapproving towards such transformative processes that are perceived as showing irreverence towards the blues traditions of the past, a tension which can be correlated with findings of studies in contrasting world music traditions (for example, Montero-Diaz, 2017; 2018, Tan, 2017, Hilder, 2017).

Through a combination of approaches to the perception of meaning including those advocated by Lacasse (2000; 2018), Tagg (2012), and Clarke (2005) respectively, new interpretations of how popular music artefacts convey meaning are highlighted. Themes of an ongoing struggle, protest, and an overall helplessness are revealed in the narrative analysis of the song *Cleveland* that clearly depicts the ‘us and them’ dichotomy, the powerful and the powerless, and the liberated and the subjugated. The overall meaning of the song articulates an African-American experience powerfully whilst expressing a black identity that reflects cultural memory and diaspora consciousness. Yet, the expression of cultural identity in the song is both enabled and complicated by aspects of globalisation. Algiers are a multiracial and multinational group (with three members originating from Atlanta, Georgia) who have been noted to reside in separate cities without a singular geographic base, instead utilising technology to enable them to share ideas and work creatively as a collective. As a result, creative processes are shaped in part by global issues and concerns such as Brexit, and the presidential election of Donald Trump in the US (Suarez, 2017). In addition, mediated secondary sources provide the inspiration for many of the themes explored by the group, and within which there is ‘a larger indictment of a systemic and institutionalised oppression that transcends the African American experience and which has managed to immobilise and suppress all marginalised voices’ (Gompers, 2015). In the context of this analysis and other recordings made by the group, the blues as a significant form of cultural expression is projected universally as a sign of racial oppression that resonates with transracial individuals subjugated in disparate areas of the world. Parallels can be drawn with subsequent forms such as hip-hop, which may be distinguished from the blues in a number of ways (for example, see pp. 20, 35) but it is suggested that the social-historical

links of the blues to slavery and the immediate legacy of such throughout the Civil Rights period in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has the polyvalence to project *the* most powerful sign of racial oppression in US history. Despite the cultural expressions of blues by the group, the formal characteristics of the song do not conform to the stereotypical definition of a blues music style (pp. 39-40). Overall, the findings in chapter six support the argument that in *Cleveland*, Algiers are mining a cultural past that re-engages with the blues as a form of cultural expression and that directly reflects the tensions in contemporary US society. It is also argued that it is only through the methodological framework advocated in this study that such relationships between the blues, society, and contemporary popular music can be revealed and explored in depth.

Potential factors that impact on an interpretation of the blues and popular music artefacts can be more precisely pinpointed by utilising ethnographic methods such as the live listening exercise (LLE) which permits the correlation of aesthetic responses to contemporary popular music artefacts with an understanding of blues music in each case through qualitative responses to open-ended questions (see chapter one, pp. 71-76). The general response of listeners to meaning and style in *Cleveland* could be summarised as one of confusion, indicated in the ambiguous interpretations of the thematic contents of the song and the plurality of the stylistic classifications provided. The findings suggest codal incompetence and codal interference (see chapter seven, p. 244) are both evident in a failure to identify historic, cultural, and geographically specific references in the song, particularly within the lyrics where a number of the respondents' attention is clearly focused. The reimagining of the blues through technological mediating processes impacted on decoding the message of the song as the production values negatively affected lexical intelligibility. The expressive vocal articulation and performance of the lyrics prompted the listeners to use language that conflates racial and musical ideologies, illustrating how such historical terms such as soul persist in perceptions of contemporary music styles. The findings also indicate how preconceptions of blues music interfered with and prevented participants from identifying the cultural associations within the song that would enable greater fulfilment of a 'full competence' interpretation.

The four other analysis objects are found to contain clear links to the blues traditions of the past and whilst it is difficult to identify *precisely* which factors in each song influenced individuals in the LLE to suggest certain style labels due to the limitations of language (see chapter one, pp. 56-57), the qualitative responses to each provide insight into why the blues was perceived to be more or less evident in these contemporary examples and also illustrate how blues music is conceptualised in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The use of slide guitar in *Alabama* is strongly suggestive of the blues in the minds of the listeners, as are audio quotations from the 1950s John Lee Hooker recording in Mixendorp's *Mad Man Blues*. In the case of the former, this is despite the depersonalised lyrics, string arrangement, and replacement of the twelve-bar form originally present in the J.B. Lenoir recording with open-ended looped gestures. Additionally, the removal of tempo variations and improvisational aspects of performance inherent in the source recording in the latter does not appear to have had a significant impact on the stylistic responses of listeners. Both recordings can be considered commercially insignificant and obscure whilst being strongly perceived to be representative of the blues by the respondents in the study. The two most commercially successful recordings in the study are perceived as far less so, despite the sociocultural references to the traditions of the past clearly evident in *Freedom*, and to a lesser extent, *I Only Lie When I Love You*. Surprisingly, the majority of listeners had neither heard the former (75%) or the latter (91%), but the artists in both cases have experienced chart-topping success and it is conceivable that the listeners identified the performers in each case due to their commercial status in the music industry and potential familiarity with the proliferation of other recordings by the same artists heard in various broadcast mediums. The results in this study confirm the perceived relationship of blues music to a non-commercialised status in the music industry and show how consumers may declassify cultural artefacts in congruence with the commercial categorisation of such within the industry.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents in the LLEs (92%) do not opt to listen to blues-marketed music and correlation of this data with the stereotypical definitions of blues offered by the majority of respondents suggests that young listeners perceive such music to be outdated. Blues music is conceived as music with a slow tempo, in a twelve-

bar format and guitar accompaniment, closely associated with Robert Johnson, and it is not understood by the respondents to convey happiness or a utility for dancing. Through an Adornian critique of popular music production and consumption practices, the findings of the LLEs provide suggestive evidence that blues-marketed music through its unpopular characterisation exists only to support the pseudo-individualisation of consumer practice and additionally how such categories may be constrained or ignored in the music industry. The quantitative data associated with popular music sales figures supports this as blues-categorised music sells in extremely small quantities compared with music labelled as rock or hip-hop. It goes without saying that if contemporary musicians and record label representatives wish to maximise their earning potential, they must market their products, as much as possible, according to the preferences of the majority of mass-market consumers. Blues-marketed music (see pp. 4-5) does not ‘sell’ and so is effectively declassified in the music industry in a top-down configuration. This study has shown how the incorporation of quantitative data into a methodological framework is important in confirming the commercial status of blues-marketed music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in that such status may impact on an interpretation of culturally significant artefacts.

This study has also suggested new relationships between revivalism, popular music, emotion, and meaning in relation to the blues, including the reasons people have for finding the blues meaningful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how this may impact on the demarcation of the stylistic boundaries of blues music. The findings in chapter seven detail the components of a contemporary blues music revival and show how revivalist practices are contrasted with the approach taken by contemporary popular music producers detailed in chapter seven, with the former associated with a postmodernism of reaction and the latter illustrating a postmodernism of resistance, as defined by Foster (1985). The pluralist practices and embracement of contradictions that afford a multiplicity of meanings in reimagined blues artefacts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is contested in the curation of artefacts that exemplify repetition and a sameness in revivalist practices, dually operating on what Williams (2009) refers to as the selective level of culture. The implication is that through indexical signs of emotion and experience as ‘signs of our

lives, not signs about them' (Turino, 1999, p. 236, italics in original) engagement with the blues, as historically symbolic of difference, in a listening, performing, or curatorial capacity culminates in a semiotic battlefield of popular culture that enables individuals and collective groups to make sense of the world and contribute to a multilayered understanding of blues that becomes an additional point of contestation across all levels of culture.

According to the findings of recent studies by Interiano *et. al* (2018), in which the acoustic characteristics of more than 500,000 songs released in the UK between 1985 and 2015 are correlated with the degree of chart success, researchers found increasing bias towards 'sadness', whilst the number of songs conveying 'happiness' and 'brightness' were noted to be decreasing (Interiano *et. al*, 2018, p. 14). These findings are consistent with an earlier study by DeWall *et. al* (2011) that found increasing semantic indicators of loneliness and social isolation in the study of US song lyrics. Despite this, the UK public in Interiano's study is found to prefer happier songs, despite the increasing number of unhappy songs being released each year (Interiano, 2018, p. 14). Whilst the study is based on music information retrieval (MIR) algorithms that results in an ever-increasing number of attempts to solidify concepts of music genre whilst simultaneously modifying them, the open-source platform called AcousticBrainz utilised in the study enables anyone to contribute to an evolving database through their own audio submissions. Such databases then are also dependent to some extent on the listening preferences of those wishing to submit, and so the findings of the study should be treated with some caution. However, the results of the study can be correlated with the findings here, in that the commercial sales figures of blues-marketed music are weak in comparison with for example, chart-based pop music which is far more commercially viable and perceivably 'happier' but could also be indicative of a blues revival in the increasing number of melancholic songs being released. The results of the study also reflect perhaps the increasing expressions of emotion in anger and psychological pain that are noted to distinguish styles such as hip-hop (see p. 20) in the representation of disenfranchised groups and enabled through increasing accessibility to music production tools. As the effects of globalisation greatly afford a reimagining of the blues, a proportional increase

in both the expression and arousal of emotion associated with the blues through the use of musical indices that exist in the environment with which a listener interacts should be expected.

## **Recommendations**

The conceptual framework can be used in the future during subsequent cycles of blues reimagination and revivalism to measure the extent of the links between the past and present and in the process would no doubt reveal new and changing relationships in the perpetuation of blues music. As sites of experience forever increase in complexity through advancements made in virtual reality technology it will be interesting to see how far the blues of the past resonates in the future. Additionally, I see no reason why the framework may not be useful in research of popular music from the perspective of other music styles and genres rooted in the past such as jazz and country music or more recently electronic dance music. The use of flashpoints, as presented in this thesis, could be utilised to uncover further relationships between music and society in the way in which individuals respond to events in the world and thriving blues music scenes in disparate locations such as India and Japan have yet to be explored in any depth. Continued research into the roots of blues music from a musicological perspective is anticipated to continue and as new documents emerge and archival information made public, perhaps the Native-American traditions such as those belonging to the Choctaw people, known to have remained in the Delta region of the US until 1830, and any potential links to the development of blues music could be investigated with greater clarity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is through an appreciation of the cultural history, performative expressive elements, and the ways in which musicians encode such expressions in music that a contemporary reading of the blues can be achieved. Whilst acknowledging that the blues as a music style may well be identified through the formal elements established in the past, this oft taken-for-granted definition ignores the 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches and artefacts of

contemporary musicians who continuously reimagine the blues and who have something important to say about the world we live in, and so this work accordingly argues for an extension to the boundaries of blues music.

Notions of difference dominate discourse in society and are disseminated in a global context through social media platforms such as Twitter that go a long way in showing the strength of feeling towards such. Whether it is a singular response to sociocultural comments made by President Donald Trump or mass response to flashpoints such as the protest and counter-protest in Charlottesville, Virginia that took place last year, rooted in the legacy of racial difference in US history that gave rise to the Civil War in 1861, and which left one counter protester dead and 34 people injured, difference remains pertinent to a contemporary understanding of the construction of both society and cultural identity, despite efforts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to address these concerns. A sense of difference defines the development of blues music from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues to define the blues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century no matter what form it takes and irrespective of categorical labels applied with regards to its production, dissemination, and consumption, and in this thesis I have gone some way in showing how and why this is the case.



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# **Appendix 1: Initial Questionnaire**

## **1. About Music Style**

**<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WCJFWGQ>**

1.1 In your opinion what style of music do you think this song represents? \_\_\_\_\_

1.2 How would you describe the mood and or feeling of the music? (for example, romantic, sad, upbeat, aggressive) \_\_\_\_\_

1.3 Can you identify any particular themes within the song and if so, what are they? (for example, relationships, anti-war, literature) \_\_\_\_\_

1.4 Have you heard this song prior to today?

- a) Yes
- b) No

if YES, go to 1.4.1  
if NO, go to 2.1

1.4.1 Where did you hear it? (if unsure, please say so)\_\_\_\_\_

## **2. About Music Listening**

2.1 Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music?  
(please tick all that apply)

- a) Streaming services
- b) Video-hosting sites
- c) Music downloads
- d) CDs
- e) Vinyl records
- f) Mobile phone applications
- g) Other \_\_\_\_\_

2.2 What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5) \_\_\_\_\_

2.3 How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube? (please tick one option)

- a) 0-4 hours per week
- b) 5-9 hours per week
- c) 10-14 hours per week
- d) 15-19 hours per week
- e) Over 20 hours per week
- f) Never

### **3. About You**

3.1 Please indicate your age group:

- a) 18-25
- b) 26-35
- c) 36-45
- d) 46-55
- e) 56+

3.2 How would you describe yourself? (please circle)

**a) Asian / Asian British**

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**b) Black / African / Caribbean / Black British**

African

Caribbean

Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**c) Mixed / multiple ethnic groups**

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**d) White**

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

Irish

Gypsy or Irish traveller

Any other White background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**e) Other ethnic group**

Arab

Any other ethnic group, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Survey Pilot Results

Song: *Cleveland*  
Group: Sound & Light Engineering Foundation  
No. of participants: 7 (6 male / 1 female)  
Date: 6/03/2018

1.1 In your opinion what style of music do you think this song represents?

rock  
Rap, Popular  
soul  
modern pop, trap, dance, soul  
soul, trap, dubstep and gospel  
jazz  
indie rock

1.2 How would you describe the mood and or feeling of the music? (for example, romantic, sad, upbeat, aggressive)

aggressive  
Upbeat  
upbeat  
upbeat, aggressive instrumental,  
upbeat and excited  
personal  
moody

1.3 Can you identify any particular themes within the song and if so, what are they?

happy scene in a movie

*6/7 Respondents left blank, unsure or said no*

1.4 Have you heard this song prior to today?

100% No

2.1 Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music?  
(please tick all that apply)

Streaming services 71.43% 5  
Video-hosting sites 57.14% 4  
Music downloads 71.43% 5  
CDs 14.29% 1  
Vinyl records 28.57% 2  
Mobile phone applications 57.14% 4  
Other (please specify) 0

2.2 What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)

Pop, rock, classic, alternative  
Indie, Rock, Electronic  
R&B, Rock, Blues, Jazz,  
techno, drum and bass, house, rock, hip hop  
mumble rap, punk , ska , grunge and most EDM form  
rap/ popular music  
hip hop, rap, bassline, indie, metalic hardcore

2.3 How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube? (please tick one option)

0-4 hours per week 14.29% 1  
5-9 hours per week 14.29% 1  
10-14 hours per week 28.57% 2  
15-19 hours per week 14.29% 1  
Over 20 hours per week 28.57% 2

3.1 Please indicate your age group:

18-25 100%

3.2 How would you describe yourself?

White 100%

## **Appendix 3: Revised Questionnaire**

1. Describe what you hear
  
2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?
  
3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?
  
4. Have you heard this song prior to today? (if yes, please state where you heard it)
  
5. Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music? (please tick all that apply)
  - a) Streaming services
  - b) Video-hosting sites
  - c) Music downloads
  - d) CDs
  - e) Vinyl records
  - f) Mobile phone applications
  - g) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)
  
7. How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube? (please tick one option)
  - a) 0-4 hours per week
  - b) 5-9 hours per week
  - c) 10-14 hours per week
  - d) 15-19 hours per week
  - e) Over 20 hours per week
  - f) Never
  
8. In your opinion please describe in your own words what blues music is

9. Please indicate your age group:

- a) 18-25
- b) 26-35
- c) 36-45
- d) 46-55
- e) 56+

10. How would you describe yourself? (please circle)

**a) Asian / Asian British**

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**b) Black / African / Caribbean / Black British**

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**c) Mixed / multiple ethnic groups**

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**d) White**

- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish traveller
- Any other White background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**e) Other ethnic group**

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 4: Interview Questions**

(As explained in chapter one (pp. 76-78), these questions were posed and responded to in a face-to-face setting)

### **1. About Music Styles**

1.1 What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5) \_\_\_\_\_

1.2 Please indicate (with a tick) the importance of each of the following factors when categorising music? \_\_\_\_\_

	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
a) The background of the musician(s)					
b) The music style(s) of previous releases by the same artist					
c) Information found on compendia (such as AllMusic.com)					
d) Friends / colleagues opinion					
e) Music labels used / discussed on social media					
f) Commercial considerations					

1.3 Are there any other factors not listed above when categorising music releases?

- a) Yes
- b) No

if YES, go to 1.3.1

if NO, go to 1.4

1.3.1 Please state \_\_\_\_\_

1.4 Please describe the selection process and criteria for the inclusion of music under the categorisation of blues? \_\_\_\_\_

1.5 Do you specialise in other music styles in addition to blues?

- a) Yes
- b) No

if YES, go to 1.5.1  
if NO, go to 1.6

1.5.1 How popular are blues recordings compared to these other styles? \_\_\_\_\_

1.6 In your opinion, do authentic blues musicians exist?

- a) Yes
- b) No

if YES, go to 1.6.1  
if NO, go to 1.6.2

1.6.1 How would you define an authentic blues musician? \_\_\_\_\_

1.6.2 Please explain why authentic blues musicians do not exist \_\_\_\_\_

1.7 The following stylistic references have appeared since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, please indicate (with a tick) each label you were aware of prior to completing this interview / questionnaire

- a) Hip-Hop Blues
- b) Nu Blues
- c) Electro Blues
- d) EDM Blues
- e) Punk Blues
- f) 21st Century Blues
- g) I have never heard of any of the above

1.8 How would you describe 'contemporary blues'? \_\_\_\_\_

1.9 Which musicians would you associate with the contemporary blues label? \_\_\_\_\_

## **2. About You**

2.1 Please indicate your age group:

- a) 18-25
- b) 26-35
- c) 36-45
- d) 46-55
- e) 56+

2.2 How would you describe yourself? (please circle)

**a) Asian / Asian British**

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**b) Black / African / Caribbean / Black British**

African

Caribbean

Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**c) Mixed / multiple ethnic groups**

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**d) White**

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

Irish

Gypsy or Irish traveller

Any other White background, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**e) Other ethnic group**

Arab

Any other ethnic group, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5: Informed Consent Form

The project examines how the presentation of music style has changed and is perceived globally with a focus on examining the links between style and cultural heritage. The project involves a study of how technology has altered the development and reception of music styles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Areas examined include concerns of authenticity and appropriation; the impact of social and political factors; and modern characteristics of popular music. The primary object of study includes recorded music and live performance spanning the last ten years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to present day 21<sup>st</sup> century works

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons through verbal or written/typed communication and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Select only <b>one</b> of the following:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.</li> <li>• I do not want my name used in this project.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Participant:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*NOTE: If signing electronically, typing your name on the line above will be deemed to have the same effect as a handwritten signature.*

**Researcher:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix 6: Confirmation of Ethical Approval**

Nigel Martin  
College of Arts, Humanities and Education  
University of Derby

cc: Dr Richard Hodges; Prof Chris White; Helen Lord

24<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Dear Nigel,

### **Request for extension of Ethical Approval for PhD research: 'Re-Imagining the Blues'**

Thank you for submitting your request for an extension of the ethical approval of your PhD research, entitled 'Re-imagining the blues – a new narrative for 21<sup>st</sup> century blues music', which was originally approved in March 2016.

The research has been re-approved by Chair's Action for the forthcoming year. If your research continues beyond that time please contact the committee secretary, Helen Lord, to request a further extension of the approval.

If any change to the research described in the application is necessary you are required to make a new submission to the Committee.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Robert Burstow  
Chair of the College of Arts Research Ethics Committee

## **Appendix 7: AllMusic Categorisation Labels**

### **Charley Patton (1920s-1930s)**

AllMusic Guide to The Blues (2003)

Slide Guitar Blues, Prewar Gospel Blues, Prewar Blues, Delta Blues, Prewar Country Blues, Country Blues.

AllMusic.com (2016)

Acoustic Blues, Country Blues, Delta Blues, Prewar Blues, Prewar Gospel Blues, Prewar Country Blues, Regional Blues, Slide Guitar Blues.

### **Robert Johnson (1920s-1930s)**

AllMusic Guide to The Blues (2003)

Slide Guitar Blues, Prewar Blues, Delta Blues, Prewar Country Blues.

AllMusic.com (2016)

Country Blues, Delta Blues, Prewar Blues, Prewar Country Blues, Regional Blues, Slide Guitar Blues.

### **Muddy Waters (1940s-1980s)**

AllMusic Guide to The Blues (2003)

Slide Guitar Blues, Blues Revival, Delta Blues, Electric Chicago Blues, Chicago Blues, Electric Blues.

AllMusic.com (2016)

Slide Guitar Blues, Blues Revival, Delta Blues, Electric Chicago Blues, Chicago Blues, Electric Blues, Regional Blues.

### **Eric Clapton (1960s-present)**

AllMusic Guide to The Blues (2003)

Album Rock, British Blues, Pop/Rock, Adult Contemporary, Hard Rock, Blues-Rock.

AllMusic.com (2016)

Album Rock, British Blues, Pop/Rock, Adult Contemporary, Hard Rock, Blues-Rock, Regional Blues.

**Led Zeppelin (1960s-2000s)**

AllMusic Guide to The Blues (2003)

Group / Album Rock, British Blues, British Metal, Arena Rock, Heavy Metal, Hard Rock, Blues-Rock.

AllMusic.com (2016)

Album Rock, British Blues, British Metal, Arena Rock, Heavy Metal, Hard Rock, Blues-Rock, Regional Blues.

## **Appendix 8: Live Listening Exercise (LLE) Results**

### **8.1 Freedom - 21/03/2018**

#### **1. Describe what you hear**

- Organ, drums, shouting/vox with distortion, female vox in a jazzy powerful style with reverb, synths, guitar/brass (it is amplified with distortion so it is hard to tell which), backing vocals in a soul style, double bass- the song tries to modernise old sounds. The drums sound sampled from a very old track and are in of jazzy style and sound. Kendrick Lamar raps in his distinctive style- has not too much of a contribution to the rest of the theme of the song however this break from the rest of the elements is possibly why it is possible.
- Organ, guitar, drums, synth, backing vocals, bass. Stomping rhythms, organ heavy,
- The song sounds very intense to me and also very big production wise.
- modern pop song, female alto singer, choral backing vocals, quite dynamic, has a dark but hopeful timbre
- Quite a few sampled noises, mainly the intro, slow tempo, marching beat, very loose, strong lead vocals, nice harmonies in the chorus, basic 4/4, mainstream and marketed toward the younger generation, lead organ, KENDRICK LAMAR, Triplet flow in the third verse, very uplifting and empowering
- Noise, organs and a very bad sounding snare: sounds like it's trying to be a weird marching band
- drums, voices, slow tempo, clipping audio, low quality audio, female voice, organ, marching band, choir, rap, clapping
- pop song
- Driving kick drum, electric organ, "inspirational"
- Organ, Snare rolls, Political message
- Music

#### **2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?**

- "freedom", and themes of not giving up. the artists involved in the song are black and try to replicate old black music styles like jazz/blues/soul. the fact that the ethnic group are now free and well established in society could mean that the song is more about them.
- No idea
- In my opinion the song sounds like its about breaking free and freedom, potentially in the black community.
- taking matters into your own hands by cutting toxic people out of your life and actively trying to better yourself
- empowerment, mainly female empowerment

- It's quite unclear to me, so I don't have an opinion of what the meaning of the song is
- don't quit, stand up for yourself, in need of help
- To draw attention to the race movement / abuse of black people in America
- People build their own cages and we need to learn to break out
- Racism
- freedom

**3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?**

- jazz, blues, soul, hip hop and R&B
- Psychedelic intro, soul, spoken word/rap
- Soul and Rap
- modern pop, rap, black soul
- Pop music, with the standard rapper in the bridge
- Pop, some aspects of hip hop
- rap, blues, soul,
- hip hop, rap, pop, soul
- Pop, slightly bluesy
- Blues
- classical mixed with pop

**4. Have you heard this song prior to today? (if yes, please state where you heard it)**

- (1 person heard the song) At the closing of a programme, for example a football game when it closes the show and shows the highlights.
- 10 people had not heard this song before.

**NOTE: Question 5 represents data from two listening groups with a total of 17 participants**

**5. Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music? (please tick all that apply)**

- Streaming services 100.00% 17
- Video-hosting sites 70.59% 12
- Music downloads 70.59% 12
- CDs 41.18% 7
- Vinyl records 52.94% 9
- Mobile phone applications 58.82% 10
- Responses Other (please specify) 23.53% 4
  - Radio
  - radio
  - Cassete
  - Soundcloud

**6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)**

- Electronic (aphex twin, deadmau5, daft punk), Hip-hop (tyler the creator, kendrick lamar), Indie-rock (mac demarco, lemon twigs, tame impala)
- Blues, jazz, psychedelic rock, heavy rock, rock and roll, soul, funk, punk, hip-hop, acid house, indie
- Hip pop, Guitar music, Rap, Trap, Reggae
- doom metal, stoner rock, bassline, hardcore techno and jump up DnB
- No specific
- Rock, Post Hardcore, Metal, Punk, Power metal
- rock, punk, metal, rap,
- indie, metal , hip hop , EDM.
- Blues, Jazz, Hip hop, Pop, Rock
- Ska, Reggae, Punk, Psychedelic Rock, 80's New wave
- House music

**7. In your opinion please describe in your own words what blues music is**

- the blacks' answer to western music, blues birthed many different genres of music and also helped the ethnic group in cultural expression.
- Blues music is the best music that has ever been created, it's powerful, vocal, full of expression. Full of rhythm of creativity when from the base of just 3/4 chords. Fantastic
- I would describe blues music as very rhythmic, not messy and very old school.
- black music stemming from slavery, came about in the 1930's
- Black american music founded in New Orleans
- Depressing/emotion filled music
- slow melodic music, with powerful lyrics and a passionate voice
- Music that is emotive and has a meaning
- Jazz and Rocks love child
- Blues music is a genre of music that originates from slaves, and is about oppression
- chilled

**NOTE: Questions 8-10 represents data from two listening groups with a total of 17 participants**

**8. How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube? (please tick one option)**

- 0-4 hours per week 17.65% 3
- 5-9 hours per week 23.53% 4
- 10-14 hours per week 35.29% 6
- 15-19 hours per week 11.76% 2
- Over 20 hours per week 11.76% 2
- Never 0

**9. Please indicate your age group:**

- 18-25 88.24% 15
- 26-35 5.88% 1
- 36-45 0.00% 0
- 46-55 5.88% 1
- 56+ 0

**10. How would you describe yourself? (please circle)**

- Asian / Asian British
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
- Mixed / multiple ethnic groups
- White 94.12% 16
- Other ethnic group 5.88% 1

## **8.2 Alabama - 21/03/2018**

**1. Describe what you hear**

- Contemporary blues beat(Minimal pattern, Big sound), mixed with more dynamic slide guitars I wouldnt expect on a modern pop release. Vocals are very up front with quite a bit of reverb, not much being said in the lyrics, something i would expect from a modern 'pop' track
- Blues. slide guitar. bass /slap bass. cigar-box guitar. string pad. washboard percussion. "Eric Clapton". Delta Blues.
- Walking Pace, Slide Guitar, Western, Spacious, Synth Pad, Drums, Soulful, Blues, Cowboy, Delay, Dreamy,
- Bass line very melodic and solid, mellow, Walking pace, Twangy guitar, Western Vibes, Spacious, Groovy, Complex guitar rhythms, Very little dynamics, Strings blend well, Bass and guitar carry the song, Simplistic yet interesting,
- very familiar bass line( the Beatles) very good production, slide guitar, very good groove, very repetitive however not boring as more layers are added and taken away,
- drums guitar bass

**2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?**

- i think it is intended to put the listener into a certain time frame, particularly frontier america (late 19th early twentieth century). it does this with its carefully chosen sonic palette and use of buzz words such as the repeated 'Alabama'
- Not missing home but really missing home
- To me, the meaning or feel of the song is one of solitude and strength. The song has a lot of weight which drives home the power and danger of the world this song is set in.
- Feels like a story about loneliness
- not liking your home, because off things bad things that have happened there,

- don't love the place you're from

**3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?**

- I feel the track represents pop music trying to emulate an era, such as delta blues in this case, but the modern processing keeps it in a more contemporary setting, in order to compete sonically with other modern releases.
- Delta Blues
- Delta Blues, Country, Pop
- Western/Country/Blues
- deep south and country, with rocky elements to it , blues
- country ish

**4. Have you heard this song prior to today? (if yes, please state where you heard it)**

- No 100% 6

**6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)**

- Punk, 80s Post Punk/Goth, Dreampop/Shoegaze, Psychedelic/Experimental, Experimental Hip Hop
- classical. electronic dance music. blues. country. rock.
- Lofi HipHop, Electronic Music, Indie
- Alternative, Rock, Pop, Funk, Pop Rock
- Rock, metal, alternative, rap, grunge
- r&b hiphop

**7. In your opinion please describe in your own words what blues music is**

- Blues is any (primarily guitar based) music, with the performer showing emotion and feel through their playing/singing.
- soulful melancholia
- Soulful
- Start point of rock, Very mellow walking pace music, with twangy leads
- the godfather of most modern music, especially rock
- soulful, has feeling-mores than other genres

## **8.3 Mad Man Blues - 22/03/2018**

**1. Describe what you hear**

- Fiddle, guitar, elec. guitar, drum, sub synth
- same pattern with loud drums, trumpets, very energetic and someone singing/talking
- a modern remix of an old blues song, sounds like a hip hop beat
- Samples, rhythm and blues with a hip hop drum beat

- Great beat, lofi vocal and intro makes the sound unique.
- loud drums, repeated rhythm from old recording
- Guitar, drums, distorted vocals
- Blues with electronic drums
- predominately drums

**2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?**

- Represents the fusion of early African-American-influenced Blues and modern electronic dance/hip hop
- complaint about something
- the depression in America around the blues era is still around today
- Some dude has the blues
- I don't know, it didn't feel extremely meaningful, more of a good tune.
- madman blues
- Not sure
- the blues - pain
- blues

**3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?**

- American Southern Blues, Hip hop, EDM
- don't know
- blues, rock, hip hop
- Hip hop, Blues
- Blues. But kind of Lo-Fi / Jazzhop
- blues,
- Modern interpretation of delta blues
- blues and electronic
- blues mixed with modern rap style

**4. Have you heard this song prior to today? (if yes, please state where you heard it)**

- Yes 11% 1 (No 89% 8)
- Haven't heard this remix but the sampled song sounds very familiar

**NOTE: Question 5 represents data from two listening groups with a total of 20 participants**

**5. Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music? (please tick all that apply)**

- Streaming services 90.00% 18
- Video-hosting sites 35.00% 7
- Music downloads 50.00% 10
- CDs 65.00% 13
- Vinyl records 40.00% 8
- Mobile phone applications 35.00% 7
- Other (please specify) Performances and gigs

**6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)**

- Blues Rock, Pop. Rock, Indie Acoustic, Alt. Rock., Pop.
- pop-indie-rnb-rap-afro

- metal, rock, hip hop, funk
- Any subcategories one would assume falls under rock music
- Lo-fi bedroom pop, Anti-folk, Folk Punk, Acoustic, Singer Songwriter
- Alternative rock, Indie, metal, funk, hiphop
- Blues, Rock, Country
- rock punk soul hip hop new wave
- Deathcore

**7. In your opinion please describe in your own words what blues music is**

(1 participant skipped this question)

- An important movement contributing to racial unity and representation in the USA
- slow, sounds like a complaint
- music that expresses sadness/anger, typically uses guitar
- music from and for the soul
- A way to have a good jam and speak about what feels meaningful to you. (didn't really feel like traditional blues)
- continues rhythm, similar styles throughout the genre
- Music and outlet for the working class in particular
- music with pain in it, especially older blues

**NOTE: Questions 8-10 represents data from two listening groups with a total of 20 participants**

**8. How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube? (please tick one option)**

- 0-4 hours per week 15.00% 3
- 5-9 hours per week 5.00% 1
- 10-14 hours per week 15.00% 3
- 15-19 hours per week 40.00% 8
- Over 20 hours per week 25.00% 5
- Never 0

**9. Please indicate your age group:**

- 18-25 100% 20
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56+

**10. How would you describe yourself? (please circle)**

- Asian / Asian British 5.00% 1
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British 5.00% 1
- Mixed / multiple ethnic groups
- White 90% 18
- Other ethnic group

## 8.4 Cleveland - 22/03/2018

### 1. Describe what you hear

- Vocals, synthesisers, click drums, effects
- lots of instruments (electronic)
- Very loud and partially distorted. Harsh drumming and a vocalist utilising vibrato heavily. A powerful song that is in some parts very experimental in nature, like a grunge hip-hop techno hybrid.
- Tribal rhythms, distorted vocals, the opening is slightly overwhelming, the track is quite busy and very clearly divided into sections based on the removal and addition of "modules" of sound
- The track is very heavy sounding due to the powerful drums and soulful voice, however I cant understand the lyrics very well.
- Powerful Vocals
- Drums, Vocals, heavy effects, Backing vocals, distortion, synth?
- Electronic synth electric drums
- electronic drums with gospel backing vocals
- Heavy drums and distorted vocals with a vocal harmony
- Strong bass track, high vocals (strong)

### 2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?

- Beliefs or opinions
- im not sure
- It's a story, I cannot make out the lyrics completely but the emotion put into them resembles call and response, like talking to a rallying group, a collective. This seems to be a dark song of rallying power.
- An appreciation or return to the writer's roots
- I'm not sure what the meaning is but telling from the intense sound of the track, I think it may have a deep meaning.
- Distress, Anger
- I'm not too sure, It's a bit heavy handed for me to listen to.
- Angry
- Don't know, could not hear lyrics clearly
- Not going back to somewhere mentally or physically

- Creating a big impact

**3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?**

- Rock, soul, gospel, electronic, indie
- soul, pop, electronic
- Like previously stated, it sound experimental, like a powerful hip-hop techno grunge hybrid.
- Tribal, continuously fast paced but not like dance music
- Electronic Soul
- Electronic, Industrial.
- Heavy metal, scream, techno (i'm not too sure)
- Electric Rock
- soul and electronic music
- Electronic, Alternative, Experimental, Trap
- Rock/pop

**4. Have you heard this song prior to today? (if yes, please state where you heard it)**

- No 100% 11

**6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)**

- Alternative, indie rock, rock, pop, rap, funk
- Rock, Metal, ballad, POP/RNB
- Experimental, synth, orchestra, rock, techno (There are others to)
- Pop, acoustic, indie, electronic, alternative pop/punk
- Christian contemporary, R&B, Chill wave, Acoustic and Musicals.
- Hip/Hop, Jazz, House, R&B, Rock
- Acoustic, Pop, Dubstep, Metal , Hip-Hop
- Indie, funk, jazz, pop, rock,
- grunge, indie rock, indie pop, funk
- Indie Rock, Pop, Soul, R&B and Rock
- Heavy Metal, Musicals, rock, pop

**7. In your opinion please describe in your own words what blues music is**

- The use of limited chords, which are repeated throughout multiple songs of the same genres. These songs are generally quite simplistic. Blues derives from American heritage, where most songs include vocals, drums, guitar, piano, and potentially other country instruments. They also consist of a generic structure, such as an intro, followed by the verse, the chorus, verse, chorus and outro.
- calm, blues scale, jazzy and off beat patterns
- Blues music is emotive and 'down-to-earth' music that employs forms of music theory like walking bass, pentatonic blues, etc.
- A style of music which a lot of other genres can be traced back to
- Blues music is music that expresses deep sad emotions of the heart and soul.
- A form of Jazz played to express emotion
- Not sure, i don't really listen to blues.
- I, IV, I, V, IV, I

- classic rock music, 12 bar blues
- Music that is easy to play but hard to feel
- Rythmatic and flows

## **8.5 *I Only Lie When I Love You* - 12/04/2018**

(1 participant did not complete or submit responses in the questionnaire, after completing the consent form)

### **1. Describe what you hear**

- Drums, guitar, bass (rock/punk band set up) repetitive lyrics, layers of instruments added gradually

### **2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?**

- Relationships, social challenges

### **3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?**

- Rock, Pop Rock, Pop Punk

### **4. Have you heard this song prior to today?**

- No

### **5. Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music? (please tick all that apply)**

- Streaming services
- Video-hosting sites
- Music downloads
- CDs
- Vinyl records
- Mobile phone applications

### **6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)**

- Rock, Punk, RnB, EDM

### **7. In your opinion please describe in your own words what 'the blues' is**

- A genre of music found at the foundations of many other types of music such as jazz and rock. It is found mainly in the southern states of America

### **8. How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube?**

- 5-9 hours per week

### **9. Please indicate your age group:**

- 18-25

#### 10. How would you describe yourself?

- White

### 8.6 *I Only Lie When I Love You* - 18/04/2018

(3 participants recorded their responses on a printed copy of the survey and these responses including spelling errors were manually input online on 18/04/2018)

#### 1. Describe what you hear

- Mixture of down beats and heavy guitar amongst the lyrics
- a continuing beat?
- heavy instrumentals, loud aggressive vocals
- Guitar riff, constant strong drum beat, electronic effects on vocals, repetitive vocals, syncopated drum kit beat
- Distorted electric guitars, drums and other percussion instruments and vocals
- A guitar themed song. Quite repetitive
- Rock music, strong guitar presence, good beat, repetitive lyrics
- A rock band with a lead singer, guitarist and drummer
- Quite intensive music
- rocky kind of song, bass and drums. voice sounds bit electricy.
- Alternative rock
- A catchy song
- Pop rock, catchy
- punk grunge garage music
- Rock, safe music,

#### 2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?

- lieing about love
- Making a woman cry?
- 'I Only Lie When I Love You': that love isnt real and is full of lies
- Frustration, influences of people/situations
- It's something to do with a relationship and honesty
- He claims he only lies when he loves someone
- The relationship ship between two people
- That the singer loves someone despite his lies
- Says you like something if you get that
- talking about loving someone but makes them miserable. cant contorl emotions
- An untrustful relationship
- Loving someone that's not good for you
- loving someone bad
- Expressing feelings complicated feelings of love
- Not sure

#### 3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?

- Punk Rock
- Indie/Rock?
- indie, punk, rock
- Rock/Pop
- Indie rock

- A light rock theme
- Punk rock
- Rock
- blues / rock
- rock, electric
- Alternative rock
- Alternative
- rock pop
- Punk rock grunge garage
- Rock

**4. Have you heard this song prior to today?**

- Yes 27% 4
- No 73% 11

**5. Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music? (please tick all that apply)**

- Streaming services 86.67% 13
- Video-hosting sites 46.67% 7
- Music downloads 20.00% 3
- CDs 20.00% 3
- Vinyl records 13.33% 2
- Mobile phone applications 66.67% 10
- Other (please specify) 6.67% 1 (Spotify)

**6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)**

- Rock, Pop Punk, Indie, Rap, Metal
- Grian, hip-hop, indie, R&B, Rap
- indie, rock, poppunk, pop, 80's
- Indie, pop, dance, R&B,
- Indie, country, rock, grunge, r&b
- Alternative rock; EDM; chilled easy listening
- Bassline, rock, indie, funk, soul
- Alternate
- classical, rock,
- classic rock, country rock, country, pop punk, punk, some pop
- Alternative, R&B, rock, pop, indie rock
- Musical theatre, Pop, Rock, Disney
- Pop, Rock, Musicals and Disney
- Grime, pop, r and b, rock, hip hop
- Punk, ska, reggae, soul, rockabilly/Psychobilly

**7. In your opinion please describe in your own words what 'the blues' is**

- An incorporation of different styles of instruments
- Birth of street music
- Blues, jazzy music
- Improvisation of melodies using a particular 12 bar rhythm
- A hybrid of jazz and bluegrass country
- A jazzy melancholic style of music
- Raw, emotional, folk music
- I don't know
- like the felling you exactly know what are you talking about

- type of soul music that expresses a want of something. full of emotion
- Soft rock/jazz?
- Passionate music that describes emotions
- guitar, soulful, emotion/passion
- Jazzy music
- Early rock, started in the southern states. Robert Johnston pretty much started he.

**8. How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube?**

- 0-4 hours per week 40.00% 6
- 5-9 hours per week 20.00% 3
- 10-14 hours per week 13.33% 2
- 15-19 hours per week 13.33% 2
- Over 20 hours per week 13.33% 2

**9. Please indicate your age group:**

- 18-25 86.67% 13
- 26-35 13.33% 2
- 36-45 0.00% 0
- 46-55 0.00% 0
- 56+ 0.00% 0

**10. How would you describe yourself?**

- Asian / Asian British 0.00% 0
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British 0.00% 0
- Mixed / multiple ethnic groups 0.00% 0
- White 93.33% 14
- Other ethnic group 6.67% 1
  - Irish
  - Mauritian
  - white british

**8.7 Alabama - 19/04/2018**

(4 participants recorded their responses on a printed copy of the survey and these responses including spelling errors were manually input online on 19/04/2018)

**1. Describe what you hear**

- Vox, Slide guitar, bass, drums, blues influenced, Southern, Synths, acoustic, 'rootsy',
- bass -South American tone - repetitive lyrics -banjo/string instruments
- Rhythmic music, particularly guitar. Repetitive lyric. Soulful, sultry voice trying to express emotion on home.
- Country Western Song, Southern, modernised slightly
- The most noticable sound was the backing beat, which was a slow single clap every few seconds. I then heard a guitar before the singing began. The voice is quite raspy and the genre seems to be

quite Western - the guitar pattern reminds me of Western music. I think the different instruments harmonize well, but I think that guitar is definitely the more noticeable instrument of the song.

- I hear a beat played by some kind of drum set, a guitar, vocals
- Low bass notes, country rhythm. Basic medium tempo rock song. Steel guitar style. 12 string possibly with a slide on a blues scale.
- Deep sounds, guitar, deep male voice singing, more focus on the actual sound than the lyrics, repetitive lyrics

**2. In your opinion what is the meaning of the song?**

- Southern hardship
- travel -relationships. -social troubles.
- Talking about relationship with Alabama, although home not treated well by it.
- Spirit of Alabama backed up by singing of a man who loved Alabama
- I'd definitely say something along the lines of experiences in Alabama - definitely considering the line I heard the most was "I never loved Alabama, Alabama never loved me", so maybe a distaste
- love
- A man is reflecting on his love life in a rock/blues style
- Related to love?

**3. What style or styles of music do you think the song represents?**

- Blues. Rock/Roots Rock
- Country -Blues
- Blues + Country (more Blues)
- Country, Southern Rock, blues rock, soul,
- I'd say a western genre
- I don't know much about music styles, but it sounds like a mixture of blues and something else
- Rock, classic rock, blues rock.
- American? Unsure.

**4. Have you heard this song prior to today?**

- Yes 0
- No 100% 8

**5. Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music? (please tick all that apply)**

- Streaming services 50.00% 4
- Video-hosting sites 50.00% 4
- Music downloads 50.00% 4
- CDs 62.50% 5
- Vinyl records 50.00% 4

- Mobile phone applications 62.50% 5
- Other (please specify) 37.50% 3
  - Radio Stations
  - Tape
  - Radio

**6. What music styles do you usually listen to? (please enter up to 5)**

- Alt. Rock, Pop Rock, Psychedelia, Post-punk, Experimental Rock.
- Punk -Rock -EDM -RnB
- Indie, Mainstream Pop, 80's incl. new romantics, ska, etc
- Hip-hop, metal rap/rapcore, southern hip-hop/country rap, classic hip-hop, rock
- Indie, pop, punk, emo, rap
- pop, alternative, soundtracks from musicals and movies, 90s music generally
- Rock, country soul, hip hop, alt rock, blues
- Pop, rap/grime, indie, 90s

**7. In your opinion please describe in your own words what 'the blues' is**

- African-American derived folk music, or mergers with later developments.
- A genre of music which originated in South America. It usually consists of 12 bars and bass inflections are prominent - later fed into jazz an Rock
- Early form of soul music. Very expressive and conveys emotions. Usually tells story.
- Soul that has collided with rock to describe the feelings of the musician that plays it and to inflict it upon others
- Soulful music, normally relying on strong emotions
- A 1920's African American music style about the tough life people had, utilising instruments such as harmonica, guitar, and piano. It was then developed and changed into rock in the 1950's
- Linked to jazz music?

**8. How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube?**

- 0-4 hours per week 25.00% 2
- 5-9 hours per week 12.50% 1
- 10-14 hours per week 25.00% 2
- 15-19 hours per week 12.50% 1
- Over 20 hours per week 25.00% 2
- Never 0.00% 0

**9. Please indicate your age group:**

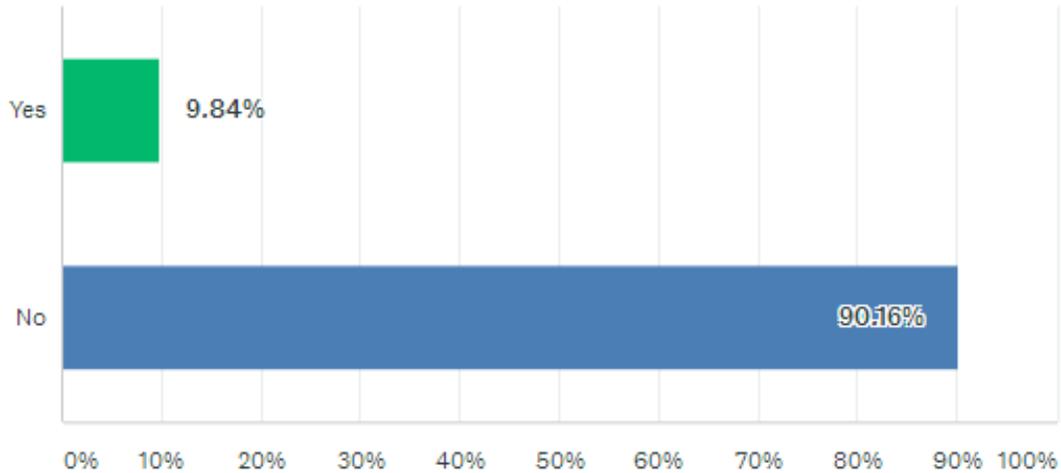
18-25 75.00% 6  
 26-35 12.50% 1  
 36-45 0.00% 0  
 46-55 12.50% 1  
 56+ 0.00% 0

**10. How would you describe yourself?**

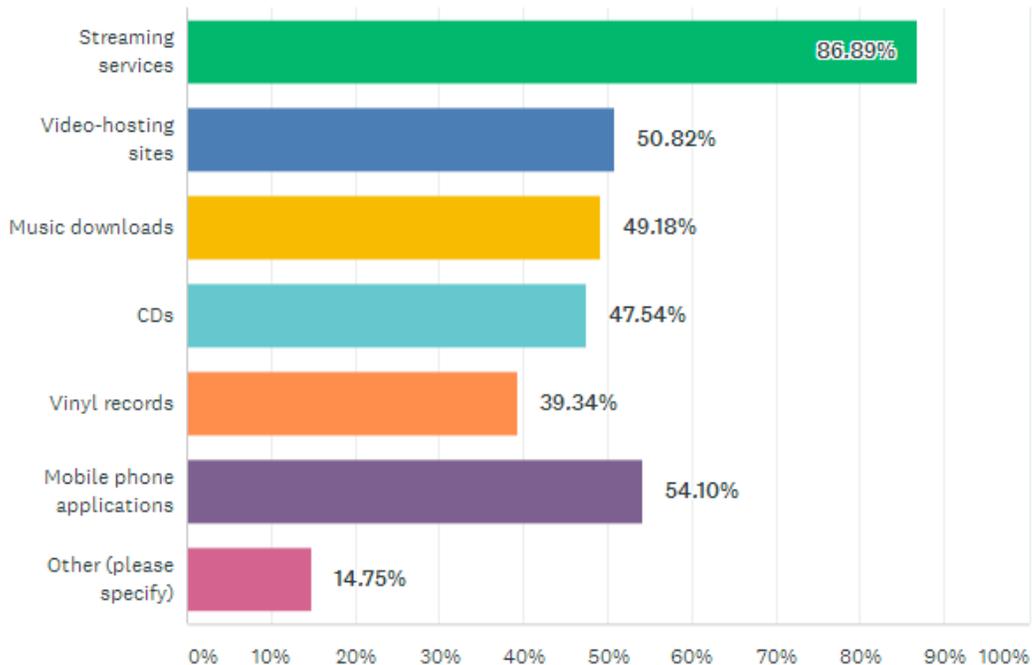
- Asian / Asian British 0.00% 0
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British 0.00% 0
- Mixed / multiple ethnic groups 12.50% 1
- White 87.50% 7
- Other ethnic group 0.00% 0
  - Cornish
  - Black/white Caribbean

## **Appendix 9: Overview of Quantitative LLE Data**

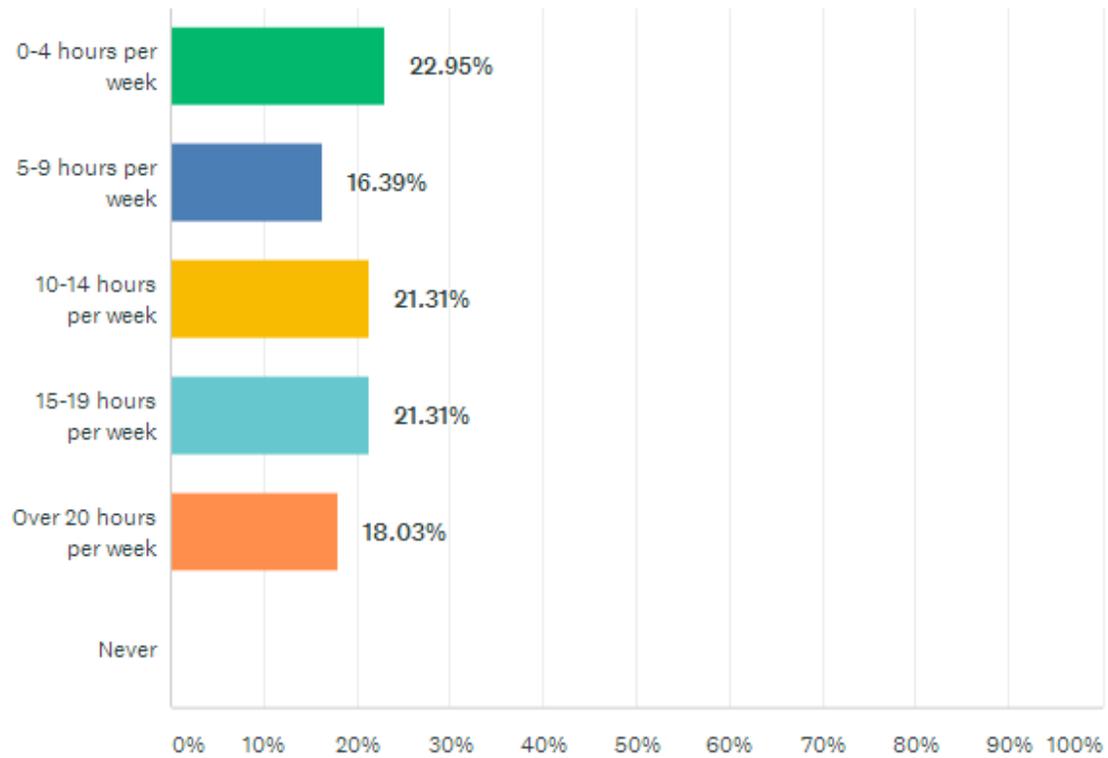
### **9.1 Have you heard this song prior to today? (Q4)**



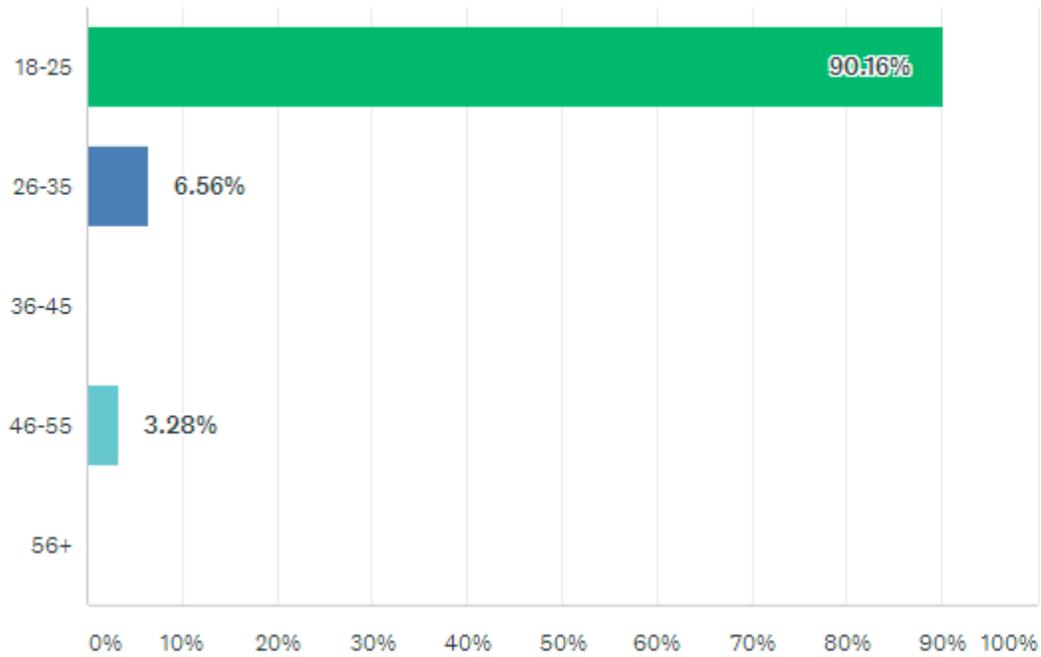
### **9.2 Which music platform(s) and/or formats do you usually use to consume music? (please tick all that apply) (Q5)**



### 9.3 How often do you use video-hosting sites such as YouTube? (Q8)



#### 9.4 Please indicate your age group (Q9)



#### 9.5 How would you describe yourself? (Q10)

