HARD-BOILED AND JAZZ CRAZY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN DETECTIVE FICTION AND POPULAR MUSIC IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR I

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ABSTRACT

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This project is meant to explore the development of jazz and hard-boiled fiction in the period during which both popular forms found a national audience and reached the peak of their popularity – the years from World War I to the beginning of World War II.

Chapter one deals with the emergence of jazz as a popular musical style distinct from ragtime. Jazz made national headlines with the Victor release of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's "Livery Stable Blues" on March 7, 1917 – just three weeks prior to the United States decision to enter World War I as a combatant. The jazz of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band offered a distinctly American sound that promoted the patriotic zeal of the time without challenging the dominant status quo – particularly in regard to race relations. The United States entry into World War I heightened tensions between white and black Americans, as evidenced by the high number of race riots erupting across the country during this period. To a limited extent, however, the war also helped pave the way for African American jazz through the work of James Reese Europe, whose military band took France and England by storm.

In chapter two, the antecedents of hard-boiled fiction are discussed, beginning with the early interest afforded crime literature. The mystery genre emerged in the United States at the hand of Edgar Allan Poe in the 1840s, but was cemented in the public imagination through the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose iconic creation – genius detective Sherlock Holmes – and atmospheric description of Victorian London set the template for mystery fiction followed in Great Britain and America for decades. However, it was from the colorful world of the dime

novel detectives that mystery pulp magazines took shape, beginning in October, 1915, when long-standing dime novel hero Nick Carter was replaced by the pulp title *Detective Fiction*.

Chapter three discusses the immediate aftermath of World War I on American culture, detailing how the social and moral tensions of the war continued to fester among pockets of Americans across the country. These tensions fueled the ongoing debate regarding jazz music, as it became the accompaniment to postwar rebellions against attempts to reinstate the pre-war status quo. Chicago became the center of the jazz world during these years, particularly among the fabled nightclubs of the South Side.

Chapter four discusses the emergence of the most successful hard-boiled pulp magazine *Black Mask*, which began in 1920 as nothing more than a money maker meant to support the literary risk-taking of *The Smart Set*, edited by H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan. One of its greatest contributors in the 1920s was Dashiell Hammett, who epitomized the hard-boiled style in that decade. Hammett's stories helped transform the mystery novel from the erudite sophistication made popular by British writers into an edgy, tough American style.

The final chapter briefly discusses the developments of jazz and hard-boiled fiction in the 1930s, as American interests turned toward the constraints of the Great Depression and, by mid-decade, war again loomed on the horizon. Together these chapters show the parallel development of jazz and hard-boiled fiction, taking into account the impact of World War I on both American society as a whole and, more specifically, on the individuals instrumental to the development of these two popular American genres.

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For Amelia Kattar
-and-
Marguerite "Holte" Ablan.

In memory of morning toast and coffee,
the Shenandoah bus game, and one pink sweater.

For a short time, you were half my known world.
Thank you for taking care of me.

Your stardust is the stuff that dreams are made of.

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Introduction

This project is meant to explore the development of jazz and hard-boiled fiction in the period during which both popular forms found a national audience and reached the peak of their popularity – the years from World War I to the beginning of World War II. A number of excellent studies examine jazz and hard-boiled fiction in the interwar period and a few, such as Kathy Ogren's work, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz*, cite the social upheaval of World War I as a catalyst for developments in the 1920s or 1930s. However, those titles that mention World War I as a significant factor in reshaping American popular entertainment do so only briefly. To date, there is no full-length, in-depth study of the impact of World War I on American popular entertainment.

In an attempt to begin such a discussion, this work focuses on jazz and hard-boiled fiction for a number of reasons. To begin with, both popular forms follow a roughly similar trajectory, gaining national attention in the late-1910s amid moral controversy. During World War I, both jazz and hard-boiled fiction were in a period of transition, emerging out of earlier popular forms that initially shared many characteristics with the new styles – ragtime, in the case of jazz, and dime novels, in the case of hard-boiled fiction. Jazz and hard-boiled fiction also shared in a dubious public perception, being seen by many as shocking and corrupting influences; in both cases, this perception was strengthened by associations with the marginalized in American society – whether that be African Americans or working class immigrants. Fueling the moral controversy surrounding jazz and hard-boiled fiction was the further association of both popular forms with the criminal underworld, which took center stage during the years of Prohibition. In addition to these many similarities, both jazz and hard-boiled fiction occupied a somewhat unique place in American popular culture – regarded by many, despite the controversies surrounding both genres – as quintessentially American.

The purpose of this project is two-fold. First, by examining the cultural connections and social tensions embodied in American hard-boiled fiction and jazz in the 1920s and 1930s, new insights into the shared and complex imaginative impulses that fed the birth of two iconic American popular art forms will be sought. Second, by placing these findings within a wider artistic and transnational spectrum that takes into account the historical context (i.e., World War I and the cultural milieu that preceded it) from which hard-boiled fiction and jazz surfaced on the world stage, a new evaluation of the cultural and psychological impact of the First World War on the United States – especially in relation to the development and popularity of hard-boiled fiction and jazz – will emerge.

The tendency to dissect the sociocultural impact of World War I amid discussions of the interwar era is regularly present in European and British studies of the era. Britain, especially, has demonstrated an obsessive interest in the effects of the Great War on English society and culture, as demonstrated by the numerous titles published every year on the subject, such as Rosa Maria Bracco's *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War, 1919-1939* (1993), Allyson Booth's *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism and the First World War* (1996), Richard Overy's *The Morbid Years: Britain between the Wars* (2009), and Samuel Hynes' *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (2011).

In Europe, as well, numerous studies examine the correlation between interwar society and the war experience; among these are Modris Eksteins' *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989), Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1998), and Jeremy Black's *The Great War and the Making of the Modern World* (2011). In North America, Canada has also produced a number of cultural

studies relating to the impact of the Great War in that country – Jonathan Franklin William Vance's *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (1997), is one example.

In America, however, the study of World War I is typically absorbed by issues of military or political history relating to the war itself, with little or no recognition of any significant sociocultural impact in the United States as in the rest of the warring nations. Recent titles in this vein include the US-French comparative analysis *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (2005), edited by J.M. Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States, 1919-1939* (2003), edited by Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917-1918* (2000) by Byron Farwell, and *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (2001) by Robert H. Zieger. Steven Trout's recent work, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941* (2010), also primarily concentrates on questions of military and political experience – remembrance through interwar military service and soldier memorials – despite its potential to fill the cavernous gap between cultural studies of the war's social impact in the United States and the rest of the participant nations. Only *The Legacy of the Great War: Ninety Years On* (2009), a series of public forums held among "fourth generation" World War I scholars advancing a transnational approach to the topic, seeks to redress the fallacy that "American society did not suffer the consequences of the Great War that virtually all European countries knew" (6).

A primary focus of this work is to explore the potential points at which Americans, either as individuals or communities, made sense of the war and its impact on the world through emerging popular culture that would one day overtake the world. Considered during the the centennial of the First World War, this fresh examination of the American struggle to return to

normalcy will strive to illuminate, through the popular genres of jazz and hard-boiled fiction, the cultural struggles tugging and pulling at the interwar generation, providing insights into how the experience of total war, and its attendant onslaught against the social order and cultural memory defining Western civilization, fed both an anxious determination to forge new cultural paths and a fear of where those paths might lead. For both jazz and hard-boiled fiction, the initial mainstream response of audience and cultural critics alike was highly dismissive, even accusatory; the brash, raw element in both genres, so different from Victorian formality or Progressive uplift, terrified whole communities unsteadily caught up in the changes sweeping American society both during and after World War I. As Kathy Ogren fascinatingly relates, even babies were considered at risk of "moral decay" and worse through exposure to jazz (3-7).

Of particular interest to this project is the fact that both jazz and hard-boiled fiction – now regularly held up as distinctly and quintessentially American art forms – emerged in the mainstream at nearly simultaneous moments and came to be accepted, even canonized, at home and imitated overseas. How is this significant, both to the development of these two art forms and to the understanding of American culture in the post-World War I period? In exploring these questions, what contemporary responses to the First World War and its immediate aftermath might be reclaimed from the ether of historical and critical neglect? How did this hostile convulsion of Western civilization shake-up and remake American society and, in the process, impact its cultural output and, subsequently, its cultural identity as perceived at home and abroad?

The connections between literature and jazz run deep and the shared significance of these art forms to the interwar period seem beyond debate. Yet, while critics and historians pay homage to the significance of social and moral shifts occurring in postwar America during the

1920s and 1930s, explanations for this shift are almost universally placed on the financial and political immediacy of a dramatic "boom and bust" economy and the flawed peace constructed by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which ultimately ushered in the next world war. This critical trend, started as early as 1931 with the publication of Frederick Lewis Allen's popular history *Only Yesterday* and its follow-up *Since Yesterday* (1940) that detailed interwar American life, suggests an overly simplified cause and effect relationship between the American pocketbook and the nation's cultural sphere.

While it is inarguable that the financial situation of the United States after the Great War played a massive part in creating, and then defining, the role of America within the wider world, it does not recognize questions relating to the American experience of assuming a newly-minted role on the world stage. Even if, as President Coolidge asserted in 1925, the business of America was business, the culture of America was still busy proving its metal. To begin with, there was the long history of cultural dependence – whether inherent or perceived – on the sophisticated brilliance of Western Europe, and especially Britain. Beginning in the late-19th century, culture came to be understood as a binary force capable of social uplift or degradation, mapped out in such "highs" as symphonic music and serious literature, or such "lows" as jazz and dime novels. Amid the pre-war influx of non-WASP immigrants and the Great Migration, a culture war of sorts was instigated by the intellectual and wealthy elites of America who championed the highbrow culture of Europe over organic, improvisational popular art forms that were beginning to take hold in communities across the nation. By the start of the interwar period, when American political and economic ascendency was unmistakable, the legitimacy of United States culture was still hotly debatable: "despite the extraordinary success of American industrial

methods and technologies, American culture remained a backwater" (Savran 49). It was from this milieu that hard-boiled fiction and jazz emerged.

In the case of hard-boiled fiction, the literary inheritance of dime novels and pulp fiction magazines must be discussed before any understanding of the mass-market appeal of such writers as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler can be achieved. A number of excellent studies detail the progression toward a recognized "hard-boiled" genre; among these are Charles J. Rzepka's *Detective Fiction* (2005), Lewis D. Moore's *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present* (2006), and Shelley Streeby's "Dime Novels and the Rise of Mass-Market Genres" in the *Cambridge History of the American Novel* (2011). While such works demonstrate the impetus for embracing a hard-boiled genre among certain publishers, writers, and magazines – most importantly *Black Mask*, in which several of the leading hard-boiled writers found their start – there is often much less said regarding the sociocultural impetus among readers to purchase and read hard-boiled fiction.

Exceptions do exist, perhaps most notably in Erin Smith's *Hard-Boiled: Working Class Readers and Pulp Magazines* (2000). However, while each work shows varying interest in relating the development of the hard-boiled genre to the social developments of the interwar period, none of them meaningfully relate this upheaval to the direct impact of the First World War, as evidenced by this representative statement by Jopi Nyman: "The emergence and popularity of hard-boiled fiction, with its emphasis on a particular form of language, masculinity, and toughness, cannot be explained without reference to the relationship between the genre and post-war American society, with its changed social structure, cultural values, and moral codes" (*Men Alone* 28). The emphasis always falls on the *post*-war cultural climate without looking back to the catastrophic wartime events and the resulting anxiety toward the fragility of Western

civilization – including the flaws of those political, military, and cultural arbiters who ordered and commanded the prewar world – that helped to shape the interwar era.

Perhaps, partly, this is due to the difficulties of analyzing formula literature. Since John Cawelti's 1969 essay, "The Concept of Formula in the Study of Popular Literature," scholars have debated the correct positioning of mystery and crime fiction in relation to canonical American literature. In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976) and subsequent works, Cawelti has argued that overcoming scholarly reticence to raise formula literature, often recognized as merely "relaxation, entertainment, and escape," to a position of valuable literary and historical insight requires that scholars:

> treat them as what they are: artistic constructions created for the purpose of enjoyment and pleasure. To come to some insight into their cultural significance we must arrive at some understanding of them as a form of artistic behavior. Because formula stories involve widely shared conventions, what one could call a form of collective artistic behavior, we must also deal with the phenomenon in relation to the cultural patterns it reveals and is shaped by, and with the impact formula stories have on culture (1-2).

British mystery and crime fiction is especially useful in drawing parallels between American and British reactions to the war. Considered by scholars as the golden age of the classical detective story, British mysteries from the interwar period encapsulate a static world of decency and fair play – marred by an offstage murder, but neatly resolved by an amateur or professional detective at the story's end; emotion rarely, if ever, ruffles the veneer of this society. Colin Watson argues that this detached manner, which "seems to a later generation to be a slightly comic affectation might well have been a defensive mechanism born of an experience so appalling [World War I] that it rendered millions emotionally emasculated" (*Snobbery with Violence* 107). Certainly, the static, privileged world inhabited by characters like Dorothy Sayers' Peter Wimsey speaks to what Ernest Mandel recognizes in Britain as an interwar

recourse to nostalgia for the illusion of a prewar social order and imperial glory once thought to be unchangeable, now shattered – alongside lives and cultural heritage – by the war (*Delightful Murder* 27-30). In interwar America, the hard-boiled tradition follows a very different trajectory; as J.K. Van Dover relates, it is "urban" and "raw," a world "largely unredeemed by any compensating cultural heritage" (*Certainty* 40). Yet, for all his tough cynicism, the hard-boiled detective remains, for many scholars, a romantic, even sentimental, character type.[1]

Complimenting this discussion, the cultural experience of interwar jazz will weave through the threads of interwar American popular culture and the hard-boiled tradition. Alongside mystery fiction, jazz is arguably the first popular culture genre to make the leap from American cities to European capitals, especially Paris and London. Historically, it is one of the central cultural phenomena of twentieth century America, and its image of the jazz soloist shares many central characteristics with the hard-boiled detective: there is the individualism of the maverick soloist/detective, the improvisation of the soloist and the vigilante justice of the detective both indicating a desire to move beyond the confines of the established order. There is also the shared culture of illicit substances, especially alcohol, and connections to the criminal underworld, which were fictionally necessary to the hard-boiled detective to solve cases and factually necessary to interwar jazz musicians in providing Prohibition-era performance spaces, such as speakeasies, that were often bankrolled and operated by organized crime syndicates. By focusing on the interwar development of jazz, both in America and abroad, this study will examine potential connections between jazz and hard-boiled fiction that offer evidence of a deeper cultural and psychological response to the First World War in the United States, as well as deeper ties between two quintessentially American forms of popular culture. The interwar

[1] See, Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, pp. 40-5, and Cassuto, *Hard-Boiled Sentimentality*, pp. 4-16.

focus of this project will extend, briefly, into the era of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. By providing a brief examination of the ways in which the post-World War II experience recast American popular culture, this study will begin to show how interwar jazz and hard-boiled fiction altered alongside the nation and the world. By examining such issues on the eve of the World War I centennial, this project seeks to reclaim the vibrant and poignant cultural and psychological battles of an American generation lost between two worlds and the wars that defined them.

Chapter one deals with the emergence of jazz as a popular musical style distinct from ragtime. Jazz made national headlines with the Victor release of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's "Livery Stable Blues" on March 7, 1917 – just three weeks prior to the United States decision to enter World War I as a combatant. The recording, noted for its fast tempo and brash novelty, captured the frenzied spirit of mainstream America in the weeks leading up to entry in the war. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, a group of white musicians from New Orleans, presented listeners with a shocking, yet exciting sound that provided an outlet for the developing war hysteria becoming evident across the country. Antagonism toward Germany and her allies had been fueled, from the beginning of the war in Europe in 1914, through heavy-handed propaganda emerging from the allies – especially Great Britain – which fostered the image of the rampaging Hun, responsible for everything from raping battlefield nurses to slaughtering innocent babies. In March, 1917, details of the Zimmerman Telegram were made public, providing evidence of a German plot to woo Mexico into war against the United States, which solidified mainstream anger toward Germany. President Wilson's administration furthered this burgeoning hatred via the creation of the CPI – the government's wartime propaganda department, which oversaw the production and distribution of everything from pamphlets to

films, insuring that these cultural products stoked American patriotism while simultaneously raising the necessary war will against Germany to encourage Americans to join the fight.

In this light, the jazz of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band offered a distinctly American sound that promoted the patriotic zeal of the time without challenging the dominant status quo – particularly in regard to race relations. The United States entry into World War I heightened tensions between white and black Americans, as evidenced by the high number of race riots erupting across the country during this period. To a limited extent, however, the war also helped pave the way for African American jazz through the work of James Reese Europe, whose military band took France and England by storm. Prior to the war, Europe achieved mainstream fame in New York as the musical director for the ragtime dancing team of Vernon and Irene Castle, although his musical achievements extend far beyond his association with the Castles. Following the legendary performances of his Hellfighters band in France, Europe returned to America as a celebrated jazz leader, gaining the acceptance of mainstream America due to his well-publicized status as a war hero and the polished professionalism of his musicians. Although numerous critics, musicians and listeners would continue to debate the role of African American culture in the development of jazz, the acceptance of James Reese Europe as an ambassador of the new style of American music provided an opening for the likes of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington in the 1920s.

In chapter two, the antecedents of hard-boiled fiction are discussed, beginning with the early interest afforded crime literature, such as the various iterations of the *Newgate Calendar*, which began in 1698 as broadside ballads recounting supposedly true histories of inmate awaiting execution at London's Newgate Prison. The mystery genre emerged in the United States at the hand of Edgar Allan Poe in the 1840s, but was cemented in the public imagination

through the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose iconic creation – genius detective Sherlock Holmes – and atmospheric description of Victorian London set the template for mystery fiction followed in Great Britain and America for decades. Alongside these developments, the 1850s saw the emergence of the dime novel as a repository of popular, cheap fiction of all sorts made readily available to American readers in ephemeral formats. While more legitimate magazines and publishers sought to rival the success of Sherlock Holmes, dime novels merely sought to entertain and encouraged authors to provide a wide mix of imaginative themes and locales, such as the American frontier, providing readers with an American setting at odds with the rarefied sophistication of Conan Doyle's imitators. It was from the colorful world of the dime novels detectives that mystery pulp magazines took shape, beginning in October, 1915, when long-standing dime novel hero Nick Carter was replaced by the pulp title *Detective Fiction*.

Chapter three discusses the immediate aftermath of World War I on American culture, detailing how the social and moral tensions of the war continued to fester among pockets of Americans across the country. These tensions fueled the ongoing debate regarding jazz music, as it became the accompaniment to postwar rebellions against attempts to reinstate the pre-war status quo. Chicago became the center of the jazz world during these years, particularly among the fabled nightclubs of the South Side. The dominance of Chicago began to fade, however, as Prohibition-fueled gang violence and moral crusading converged, causing many clubs to lose the majority of their audience or close altogether. Following the closure of so many Chicago jazz clubs, musicians began leaving the city for New York and the emerging cultural scene of Harlem.

Chapter four discusses the emergence of the most successful hard-boiled pulp magazine *Black Mask*, which began in 1920 as nothing more than a money maker meant to support the

literary risk-taking of *The Smart Set*, edited by H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan. Despite a rough beginning, *Black Mask* became the birthplace of hard-boiled fiction. One of its greatest contributors in the 1920s was Dashiell Hammett, who epitomized the hard-boiled style in that decade. Prior to his writing career, Hammett worked as a Pinkerton detective. This career, however, was cut short due to continuing health complaints traced back to his service in World War I. Hammett's stories helped transform the mystery novel from the erudite sophistication made popular by British writers into an edgy, tough American style.

The final chapter briefly discusses the developments of jazz and hard-boiled fiction in the 1930s, as American interests turned toward the constraints of the Great Depression and, by mid-decade, war again loomed on the horizon. Following the onset of the Depression, mainstream American audiences preferred undemanding "sweet" jazz by the likes of Rudy Vallee, leading radio broadcasters and sponsors to champion this style of popular music. However, radio responded in 1935 to the breakout success of a new style of jazz music known as swing. The success of big bands led by the likes of Benny Goodman prompted radio networks to corporatize the swing sound, which ultimately led to the fracturing of jazz in the 1940s. Hard-boiled fiction also responded to the Great Depression, with several new writers attempting to make ends meet by writing for the likes of *Black Mask*. One such writer was Raymond Chandler, who had attained wealth in the 1920s working for an oil syndicate, but lost everything in the depression due to tightening company finances and his own alcoholism, which began during his service in World War I. Raised in England, Chandler had a unique ear for American slang and brought a lyricism to his writing that was lacking in earlier hard-boiled fiction. However, the 1940s saw a decline in pulp magazines as cheap, mass-market paperbacks gained favor. In addition, the hard-boiled detectives so popular in the 1920s and 1930s were being replaced by the more timely spy

story, which coincided with the emergence of the Cold War. Together these chapters show the parallel development of jazz and hard-boiled fiction, taking into account the impact of World War I on both American society as a whole and, more specifically, on the individuals instrumental to the development of these two popular American genres.

Chapter 1: Delirium

"Jazz music is the delirium tremens of syncopation." – Walter Kingsley, "When Comes Jass?," p. 6.

"As a new form of music, it was revolutionary." – H.O. Brunn, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, p. xv.

Jazz "has aggravated the feet and fingers of America into a shimmying, tickle-toeing, snapping delirium and now is upsetting the swaying equilibrium of the European dance." – "Stale Bread's Sadness Gave 'Jazz' To the World," p. 131.

"There is not the slightest doubt that in this maelstrom of rhythm there abides a powerful tonic effect. Through the medium of the physical, it reaches and influences the psychological attitude. I have been convinced of the truth of this fact by personal experience, undergone not once but many times." – "Delving into the Genealogy of Jazz," p. 135.

My Kingdom For A Novelty

On Saturday, March 7, 1917, just three weeks before the United States officially entered World War I, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) stormed the nation with the Victor Records release of their first recording, "Livery Stable Blues." The ODJB, a white band from New Orleans, were the first to release music explicitly labeled as jazz and, as such, exerted a "powerful influence" on early jazz and American popular culture[2](Carney 21; Lowe 46). As the first recognized jazz recording, "Livery Stable Blues" reaped the dual benefits of novelty – in terms of both its musical content and its very existence in the public mind as jazz – and the mass distribution capabilities of the early recording industry, which significantly increased its popular appeal.[3] Musically, what the ODJB were performing held close ties to the ragtime music fueling the social dance craze of the 1910s, epitomized by such dances as the Turkey Trot, which encouraged a degree of physical improvisation and humorous gestures on the part of participants (Robinson 102; Schuller 179).

Musical humor, certainly, was part of the novel appeal of the ODJB; their 1917 recording of "Livery Stables Blues" incorporated a series of "barnyard breaks" – sounds imitating a horse, rooster, and donkey – so important to the popularity of the recording that they inspired the alternate song title of "Barnyard Blues"[4] (Schuller 181). However, improvisation – at least in its

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[2] According to reports, even African American jazz musicians were interested in the earliest recordings of the ODJB. Louis Armstrong later claimed that he and "everyone else" in New Orleans were listening following the success of "Livery Stable Blues" (Nakamura 25). See, also, Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, p. 152. However, scholars and critics have long been critical of the ODJB, questioning the authenticity of the band, both in racial and musical terms. For an excellent overview, see, Parsonage, p. 121.
[3] For a brief discussion of the early recording industry, see, Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, pp. 1-2.
[4] The ODJB/Victor release of "Livery Stable Blues" and its flip side, "Dixie Jass-Band One Step," resulted in numerous lawsuits. The development of an alternate song title for "Livery Stable Blues" is, in part, the result of one such copyright trial. In addition, ODJB biographer H.O. Brunn suggests the alternate title was chosen by Victor as a more polite option to "Livery

modern relation to jazz – was not strictly part of their style. Numerous scholars have argued that the ODJB relied on a series of rehearsed choruses to provide the idea of improvisation.[5] The February 26 recording of "Livery Stable Blues" captured:

> [t]he band's combination of ragtime rhythms, brass band instrumentation, minstrel show antics, and youthful enthusiasm [that] quickly won over young white Americans anxious for a music unique to their generation (Carney 47).

With its humorously irreverent imitation of animal noises and "the promise of something that seemed intriguingly foreign (jazz)," the Victor release of "Livery Stable Blues" sold over one million copies and became an international sensation (Shipton 104). Mezz Mezzrow recalled the impact of hearing the ODJB on record for the first time:

> They were fast and energetic and they had a gang of novelty effects the public went wild about, jangling cowbells, honking automobile horns, barnyard imitations, noises that sounded like anything but music….When I was just a kid, in Pontiac Reformatory, I was hit hard by the Dixieland Jazz Band's recording of *Livery Stable Blues* […] (qtd. in Shipton 105).

The ODJB Victor recording "shocked, frightened, confused, and finally captivated audiences," the sheer energy and novelty of its aural experience leading "Livery Stable Blues" to outsell such icons of legitimate music as Caruso and Sousa (Carney 47; Leonard 12).

As a result of this unfathomable commercial success, record companies and performance venues were "slapping the word 'jazz' […] on any kind of production that would even vaguely

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Stable Blues," which record executives considered too vulgar "to appear alongside time-honored and respected operative titles on the pages of the Victor record catalogue" (76). For more on the lawsuits, see, Brunn, pp. 75-87. In addition, see, *Variety*, "Blues are Blues, They Are," article from October 19, 1917, detailing the testimony of blues expert Professor "Slaps" White in one of the "Livery Stable Blues" lawsuits (qtd. in Koenig 120-21).

[5] For discussions regarding the ODJB and improvisation, see, Schuller, *Early Jazz*, p. 180; Carney, *Cuttin' Up*, p. 70.

support the title”[6] (Collier 97). Even Broadway’s celebrated Ziegfield Midnight Frolic incorporated jazz – as the song for its closing number, titled “When I Hear That ‘Jaz’ Band Play” – into its 1917 production (Collier 97). America’s entertainment society valued anything new – Flo Ziegfield, for instance, reportedly first heard (and dismissed) jazz after pleading with associates: “Haven’t you something new? My kingdom for a novelty” (qtd. in Koenig 120). As Thomas Fiehrer suggested, jazz was a “novel commodity in a consumer society;” in such an environment, the music of the ODJB offered a welcome (and scintillatingly controversial) distraction, resulting in a jazz craze that swept the nation (34; Carney 48). “Livery Stable Blues” introduced the concept of jazz to its largest audience to date; the result, as Alyn Shipton illustrates, was that for “the record-buying public – which at the time principally meant white Americans – the O.D.J.B. *was* jazz” (Shipton 105).

Way Down Yonder In New Orleans

Yet, despite their name (and vociferous claims by band members), the ODJB were not the original jazz band (Carney 47). Although, as Jeff Taylor argues, the ODJB “gave the public at large its first taste” of what was being called jazz, they came onto the scene

> […] at the end of an initial period of jazz’s development; they represented the culmination of a musical story that had been unfolding for at least the previous three decades (41).

Much of the earliest history of jazz comes, like the ODJB, from New Orleans. It has been mythologized as a city bursting with musical expression, as “arguably the most musical city in the country” at the turn of the twentieth century, where the European classical tradition could be

[6] Schuller discusses how the commercialization of ODJB-style jazz creates problems when “assessing the quality of early jazz” because much of what is recorded pre-1923 cannot “be considered jazz in the strictest sense” (64). As he explains, “[m]ost of these recordings were made by society orchestras, novelty bands, or jazz groups who were forced by companies recording them to play novelty or polite dance music” (ibid).

heard alongside popular vernacular tunes and formal military bands performed alongside vaudeville acts and society orchestras (Kirchner 46-7). According to Fiehrer, this "musical milieu" developed out of the city's unique "racial paradigm – a white, coloured, black hierarchy," which encompassed "European, Creole (mixed) and African" musical traditions (24). Out of this whirl of musical expressions, legendary musicians like Buddy Bolden and Sidney Bechet are thought to have developed the earliest evolutions of jazz music. However, much of what is thought regarding the beginnings of jazz is conjecture because pre-1917 jazz "existed in the shadows," having "never [been] recorded, preserved, or transmitted;" it is a music pieced together from oral histories and the later recordings of migratory musicians (Carney 53).

By 1917, however, jazz musicians were making documented inroads beyond the confines of New Orleans, performing in cultural centers like Chicago and New York. Some, such as Freddie Keppard and the Original Creole Orchestra, were performing jazz as far afield as Canada by 1914, but were still referring to their music as ragtime, which failed to incite the interest later afforded the ODJB (Miller, *Some Hustling* 17-8). Several reasons have been given as to why early jazz musicians continued to refer to their music as ragtime. To begin with, the term "jazz" was not "part of the musical vernacular in 1914;" in many instances, based on numerous oral histories, New Orleans musicians did not know that their style of music was being called jazz "until they went north" (Miller, *Some Hustling* 18; Gushee, "Origins" 10). Once the term began appearing in relation to music – 1916 is generally agreed to be the first print appearance of the word in the entertainment columns of African American press publications – it was understood to be interchangeable with ragtime (Miller, *Some Hustling* 18; Welburn 35). It was not until the breakthrough success of the ODJB that jazz and ragtime began to signify different genres of music, where jazz "was a new style and 'ragtime' as a term was shopworn" (Welburn 35).

Another reason posited for the comparatively minor success of pre-ODJB jazz bands in places like Chicago and New York is that many appeared in vaudeville theaters, which lacked the intimate, dance-ready atmosphere that became central to the 1917 jazz craze (Raeburn 42). Tom Brown's Band from Dixieland, for instance, failed to generate much interest with their "signature number, 'Mo' Power Blues,'" among vaudeville audiences, although, according to Bruce Boyd Raeburn, it was the inspiration behind the ODJB recording of "Livery Stable Blues"[7] (Raeburn 42). For black musicians, too, there was the ever-present barrier of racism, which held many back from mainstream commercial success (Nakamura 24). Although the entertainment and recording industries were unquestionably "white-owned and white-dominated," numerous oral histories suggest that at least one Creole musician was offered the opportunity to record jazz prior to the success of the ODJB. In an oft-repeated anecdote, Freddie Keppard was approached by Victor with a possible recording contract, perhaps as early as 1916, but refused the offer either out of fear that other musicians would "catch [steal] his stuff" or because he felt Victor "did not offer him enough money"[8] (Shipton 98-9). For Creole musicians, in particular, the personal demands inherent in any attempt to gain widespread, mainstream attention might have represented a threat to their unique positioning in the racial hierarchy of New Orleans, so that "many opted to remain in their hermetic neighborhoods" (Fiehrer 35). As Fiehrer notes, the well-known Creole jazz musicians of this period, such as Sidney Bechet or Kid Ory, were "atypical of their peers" (ibid).

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[7] See footnote 3 for additional information regarding authorship/copyright issues and the ODJB/Victor recording of "Livery Stable Blues."

[8] See, also, Sandke, p. 615, and Yanow, p. 220. Keppard possibly did record for Victor in 1918, making a test with the Creole Jass Band; the recording, however, has not been found so the "identity of the band is not known for certain" (Brooks 511-2).

So, why were the ODJB so successful with mainstream audiences when other bands were not? To begin exploring this question, it is important to remember that the ODJB were not an overnight sensation. They were introduced to northern audiences in 1916, playing several months at the Shiller Café in Chicago[9] (Nakamura 24). According to Julia Volpelletto Nakamura, the ODJB were not overly successful, but were kept on by club owner Harry James because "he had faith in them," which provided the band with enough time to "gradually [win] over the audience" (24). Gunther Schuller provides another reading of the ODJB in Chicago, calling the band "a more than average success" that generated "word of the group [in] New York entertainment circles" (178). Supporting the perspective that jazz interest was beginning, however slowly, to build in Chicago is a dispatch from New Orleans appearing in the November 3, 1916, issue of *Variety*:

> Chicago's claim to originating "Jazz Bands" […] [is] as groundless, according to VARIETY's New Orleans correspondent, as "Frisco"'s assumption to be the locale for the first "Todolo" and "Turkey Trot" dances. […] "Jazz Bands" have been popular [in New Orleans] for over two years and Chicago cabaret owners brought entertainers from that city to introduce the idea[10] (qtd. in Gushee, "Origins" 21).

For Schuller, at least part of the astronomical success attained by the ODJB in 1917 was due to the fine-tuning of their sound, which was achieved in Chicago:

> […] one can be certain that the ODJB was still developing […] and that the band did not hit its full stride until the end of the year. In other words, the qualities which set them apart from other groups were worked out during the Chicago period when it was able to work consistently, to rehearse and to play to an increasingly demanding audience. […] the initially rather rough polyphony of the group was refined during the Chicago period

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[9] Nakamura dates the Chicago arrival of the ODJB to 1915, but most scholars date their arrival to 1916, which is the date used here. See, for instance, Schuller, 178.

[10] The New Orleans correspondent to *Variety* was O.M. Samuels. The reference to "Frisco's assumption" relates to claims that popular dances like the Turkey Trot originated in the dance halls of San Francisco's Barbary Coast. See, Gushee, "Origins" 19-21.

> and [the] one element that set the ODJB apart from all other groups, namely its frenetic drive and capacity for playing pieces at much faster tempos than was then common, was developed during this time (179).

However, any refinement of the ODJB sound was – although significant – only preparatory to their ultimate success in 1917. In discussing the breakout success of "Livery Stable Blues," Schuller pinpoints his own reasoning behind the jazz craze unleashed by the recording:

> There was to begin with the very term *jazz*, only a few years earlier an obscene expression […]. Then there was the novelty of the music, its unprecedented exuberance and unabashed vulgarity […]. Another factor was the rapid changes in the social scene resulting from the First World War, for it seems that the ODJB, rather than having precipitated those changes by its music, came along at precisely the right moment to benefit from and to articulate them (176).

As Schuller notes, jazz – as a term and as a cultural product – was often viewed as synonymous with vice in the early years. The word, "[v]ariously derived from Africa, Arabia, the Creole, French, Old English, Spanish, the Indians, the names of mythical musicians, old vaudeville practices, associations with sex and vulgarity, onomatopoeia, and other sources," became something of an obsession with reporters and critics in 1917 (Merriam and Garner 373). In one of the first published articles on jazz, Walter Kingsley's "Whence Comes Jass? Facts From the Great Authority on the Subject" appearing in the *New York Sun* in August, 1917, a confidently blunt exposition of the term is given: "Variously spelled Jas, Jass, Jaz, Jazz, and Jascz. The Word is African in origin" (qtd. in Walser 6). Another commentator, writing for *Literary Digest* in August, 1917, began his article on "The Appeal of the Primitive Jazz" by observing that "[a] strange word has gained wide-spread use in the ranks of our producers of popular music" (qtd. in Koenig 119). While innocuous origins for the term jazz did exist, such as

the still circulating suggestion that it derived from the verb "*jaser* = to chatter, chat," many discussions of the new musical term focused on its possible connections to vice and vulgarity (Fiehrer 30). A writer for the musical journal *Étude*, writing in 1924, summarized the suggestiveness of jazz during this time, stating that "Jazz, at its worst, is often associated with vile surroundings, filthy words, unmentionable dances and obscene plays with which respectable Americans are so disgusted that they turn with the mere mention of 'Jazz […]'"[11] (qtd. in Koenig 272). Even if the term wasn't meant to be obscene, it was all too easy to make it so; H.O. Brunn, official biographer of the ODJB, recalled how one early and popular spelling variant – jass – was often made obscene by "children, as well as a few impish adults, [who] could not resist the temptation to obliterate the letter 'j' from [band] posters" (57).

Justification for the relation of jazz to vice and vulgarity seemed to come from numerous news sources, which sought to capture reader interest with stories locating the origins of jazz music in the New Orleans vice district known as Storyville. The legislated site came into existence in 1897 under the guidance of Alderman Sidney Story (Ulanov 35). As Leroy Ostransky noted in his work *Jazz City*, Storyville, "with its aura of easy women and illegal activities accompanied by hot jazz in smoke-filled rooms, has long been a favorite topic in jazz literature (33). Court Carney similarly notes that "[e]arly jazz scholars tended to overemphasize the role of the district perhaps because of a salacious interest in whorehouse jazz," although he admits that "many early jazz musicians cited the area as a place known for jazz performance"[12]

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[11] Lawrence Gushee writes that, "[w]hile it seems pretty clear that 'jazz' was synonymous with sexual intercourse around the turn of the century, it's not at all clear that this was the first or only usage, or that, as sometimes happens with matters etymological, there wasn't a sound-alike with a different meaning or origin" (*Pioneers* 314). See, also, Carney, p. 47, as well as Merriam and Garner, pp. 384-86.

[12] Carney goes on to suggest that "few if any jazz bands actually played in the district – due to limited sizes of venues, noise restrictions, and lack of available monetary compensation," citing

(33). Heightening the shock value of popular and scholarly articles that sought to relate the origins of jazz music to the brothels and gambling dens of Storyville was the news, in August, 1917, that Storyville would be closed by official order of the United States Navy due to its perceived threat to the moral and physical fitness of enlistees about to be sent to the war in Europe (Ostransky 59). The aforementioned *Literary Digest* author might have already known of the intended closure when he wrote: “For years, we are told, jazz has ruled in the underworld resorts of New Orleans. It has emancipated itself in part from its original surroundings” (qtd. in Koenig 120).

Neutral In Letter But Not In Spirit

As evidenced by the closure of Storyville, the threat of imminent war was proving increasingly impactful on American life. Where, previously, newspapers in the United States had covered war topics with the detached air of a neutral nation separated from the fighting by vast oceans, by “mid-February [1917] the possibility, and in some cases the inevitability, of United States involvement in the war was a major editorial topic” (Ripley 255). In the months prior to the declaration of war in April, a series of events steadily escalated the urgency of deciding whether or not to fight. For nearly three years the country had determinedly remained neutral as Europe and numerous colonized nations were engulfed in total war, but it was an uneasy neutrality. Political and economic concerns, not to mention strong immigrant ties and powerful propaganda, involved the interests and emotions of Americans with the outcome of the fighting. In many cases, industry and government preference was given to the Allied cause; as the editor

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instead how solo performers like pianist Tony Jackson “certainly found some employment opportunities at various brothels” (33). For more on Storyville, see, Shipton, pp. 85-6, and Gioia, p. 31.

of the Madison, Florida, *Enterprise-Recorder* observed, “we have been neutral in letter but not in spirit” (McGerr 279; qtd. in Ripley 257).

The final tipping-point came in February, 1917, two days before the Original Dixieland Jazz Band met in New York City to record “Livery Stable Blues,” when the United States government became aware of a plot initiated by Germany to bring Mexico into the European war on the side of the Central Powers. The plot, known by its instigating factor – the Zimmerman Telegram, played on long-standing hostilities between the United States and Mexico that had reached their peak during the Mexican-American War of the 1840s. In 1916, Pancho Villa’s raids into territory claimed by the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War reignited hostilities between the two nations.[13] The discovery that Germany was wooing the Mexican government into war against the United States heightened these hostilities, while bringing home the threat of war-fueled violence. Furthermore, Germany had been verified or suspected as the culprit in several violent incidents that impacted American citizens, whether indirectly, as in the sinking of the British steamer *Lusitania*, which cost the lives of 128 Americans who happened to be onboard, or directly, as in the Black Tom Explosion of July 30, 1916, which destroyed a munitions depot on the New Jersey side of New York Harbor and was rumored to be the result of German sabotage.[14] Another, more definite, incident of German sabotage occurred on February 1, 1917, in Charleston, South Carolina, where residents discovered the German freighter *Liebenfels* sinking in the Cooper River, having been deliberately scuttled by its crew in an attempt to “block the Navy Yard channel” (Moore, “Charleston” 39).

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[13] See, Harris, pp. 28-9.

[14] The Black Tom explosion caused shrapnel damage to the Statue of Liberty, cost an estimated $20 million in damages (in contemporary currency) in both Manhattan and New Jersey, officially killed five, and potentially killed dozens of unknown immigrants and vagrants living on barges near the explosion site. See, Millman, *The Detonators*, and Witcover, *Sabotage at Black Tom*, for more on this incident.

When the Zimmerman Telegram became public on March 1, 1917, many Americans were primed to think the worst of Germany due to these earlier incidents of proven or rumored sabotage, as well as the propaganda-fueled newspaper headlines often brimming with tales of the underhanded deeds of the German government and, by extension, German troops.[15] To a population familiar with yellow journalism, which sold copy by selling sensationalized tabloid-style details of shocking events and behavior, atrocity propaganda was often taken at face value; as Patricia Bradley states, "[a]ny political rationale for the war was subsumed by the atrocity stories that turned on [the threat to] women and family […]"[16] (157). Also shaping public opinion was the still-fledgling medium of newsreel films, which found it advantageous to play on the public's perception of what war ought to be, often by faking or restaging reported events for the camera while passing the films off as authentic footage.[17] As David Mould states: "The incentives for faking were strong because audiences had an image of war – shaped largely by fiction films and illustrated magazines – and the producers and exhibitors were loath to disappoint them" (145). More often than not, whether in newspaper or newsreel, not disappointing the audience meant portraying the Central Powers as matinee-worthy villains –

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[15] See, for instance, Louise Maunsell Field's 1917 *Forum* article, "Sentimentalizing Over the Hun," which argues that the German government, soldiers, and populace are unequivocally culpable in the reported atrocities of the war; she concludes her article by stating: "[…] stop sentimentalizing, and look upon the German people as what they are: that people whose barbarity has earned for them a nickname, the name of the greatest infamy that men have been able to remember or to conceive – the Huns" (qtd. in Trask 86).

[16] Readers would also be familiar with the work of the muckrakers, journalists who championed Progressive Era reforms by publishing exposés on issues of corruption and injustice. The muckraking style had, however, more or less died out by the time America entered World War I. See, Thompson, *Reformers and* War; Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism;* and Filler, *Muckraking and Progressivism in the American Tradition* for more information.

[17] See, Isenberg, *War on Film*, 57-66, and Mould, *American Newsfilm*, 142-55.

guilty of mutilating civilians, killing battlefield nurses, and destroying priceless cultural relics of Europe's past.[18]

Since the beginning of the European war in July, 1914, American newspapers and magazines had been inundated with lurid stories of German atrocities, fed most aggressively by the British war propaganda machine led by newspaper magnate Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, at Wellington House. Although voices occasionally rose up to refute the stories – as in September, 1914, when eight American reporters who had traveled with the German army wired a statement to the Associated Press to "pledge [their] professional word" that reports of German atrocities were "groundless" – these voices typically went unheard against the powerful onslaught of seemingly-sanctioned proofs and highly-publicized royal commissions, such as the Bryce Report of 1915.[19] By 1917, following three years of unending propaganda, American public opinion was generally ready to believe the worst about Germany and her allies. As English journalist Sydney Brooks wrote at the time:

> The Zimmerman disclosures came just at the right moment to precipitate the hardening conviction [among Americans] that Germany was an international mischief-maker, a pest that had to be made an end of, and that even in the Americas there could be no security until chastisement had induced a radical change […] (qtd. in Trask 64).

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[18] Fleming, p. 52. See, also, Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, for more on the destruction of cultural relics and wartime propaganda.

[19] The Bryce Report was compiled by historian Viscount James Bryce and a commission of six others at the behest of the British government. The findings of the commission were reported on the front page of nearly every newspaper in the United States; *The New York Times* led with the headline: "GERMAN ATROCITIES ARE PROVED, FINDS BRYCE COMMITTEE." See, Fleming, pp. 52-4. Joseph Carruth describes the Bryce Report as "[o]ne of the prime propaganda pieces of the war;" it "painted a terrifying picture of atrocities by the Germans in their occupation of neutral Belgium. Though many of its allegations were unsubstantiated, the report had a profound effect on American readers. Moreover, it served as a model for American propagandists beginning in 1917" (386).

On April 2, 1917, President Wilson argued that such deeds as the Zimmerman plot could no longer go unanswered and Congress, after a few brief days of deliberation, agreed. On April 6, Congress approved Wilson's resolution; America was finally at war (Fleming 1-42).

The Great Adventure

As Schuller intimated, the ODJB release of "Livery Stable Blues" came at just the right historical moment to benefit from America's long-delayed entry into the European war. The jazz style of the ODJB – redolent of familiar ragtime bands, yet intensely fresh with its faster tempos and comic novelty – presented the nation with a musical style that could both express and release the budding tensions of war, as well as the social and political fractures these tensions were revealing among the American populace; as Kathy Ogren relates, writers and musicians often "credited [jazz] with expressing a break from the past and the introduction of a new time and speed" that was "directly identified with the war" (143). The ODJB represented a novel style of music that, for many, provided a raucous form of emotional release needed by a country on the brink. Unlike previous wars, the decision to become a belligerent in World War I meant choosing to step into the *in medias res* nightmare of trench stalemate and modern, technology-based fighting, such as poison gas attacks, in a cause that isolationists argued had little bearing on American life.

For three years, however, Americans had followed the horrors of the European war, dramatically reported by the press and fought over by the overactive propaganda machines of both the Allied and Central powers to which America, as a "powerful neutral nation," was "a prime target in the war for the mind" (Carruth 385). Popular entertainments quickly joined the fray. Hollywood, for instance, began producing heavily-biased portrayals of Germans and their cause, at least partially inspired by the pressures brought to bear by President Wilson and his

Committee on Public Information (CPI) – a domestic branch of war propaganda instituted in April, 1917, and led by journalist George Creel. The Creel Committee became the sole force that "shaped America's movie effort in the war," drafting scripts, shooting film reels and regulating all film exports in a bid to control both the tenor of the war effort, domestically, and the image of the nation abroad[20] (Isenberg 71). As Mould described it, "[t]he CPI was charged with the dual role of propaganda and censorship – with spreading the American gospel to people at home and abroad, and with seeing that they didn't know too much (or enough to damage their morale)" (239). For Wilson and Creel, films provided the ideal means for stoking "war will" at home, while projecting a highly-scripted image of the nation to audiences abroad – an image calculated to "win the hearts" of Europe (Fleming 94; Fraser 175). The powerful influence of Creel's war films on mainstream America is suggested in a 1919 *New Republic* article by Florence Woolston, in which she discusses the impact of the war on the everyday life of her twelve-year-old nephew, Billy:

> When I compare the anemic stereopticon travel talks of my school days with Billy's moving picture shows, I have the sense of a cheated childhood. We had nothing in our young lives like Crashing Through to Berlin, The Hounds of Hunland, Wolves of Kulture and the Brass Bullet. Billy's mental images have been built by such pictures as these with the additional and more educational films of the Committee on Public Information and the Pathé weekly where actual battle scenes, aeroplane conflicts and real naval encounters are portrayed (qtd. in Trask 91).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Hollywood often exceeded the demands of the CPI, distributing films with bombastic titles like *The Kaiser, The Beast of Berlin*. This film, released in March, 1918, by Universal – a film studio headed by the German-born Carl Laemmle, whose heritage, some have argued, may at least in part explain the ferocity of the film's anti-German bias –

[20] For more on the CPI, see Isenberg, pp. 71-77, and Mould, pp. 237-75.

advertised that it inspired “a burning hatred for the Kaiser,” and promised: “You’ll be a better American if you see it”[21] (Marks, et.al. 30 Dec. 2012). The film, “crammed with ‘atrocities’ taken straight from the dubious news releases that accompanied the [1914] German violation of Belgian neutrality,” certainly inflamed audiences (Isenberg 148). When *The Beast of Berlin* premiered in Davenport, Iowa, a man reportedly became so enraged at the Kaiser that he rushed the screen, firing two shots from a pistol; meanwhile, in Springfield, Missouri, actor and war promoter Burr McIntosh gave a rousing (and, supposedly, impromptu) speech during intermission, praising the film and railing against the “dangers of the [immigrant] enemy here in our midst”[22] (Alvarez 5 Aug. 2010; Marks, et.al. 30 Dec. 2012). The film played upon the worst of the newspaper headlines and Allied propaganda, depicting the Kaiser as “both war instigator and war criminal,” and German troops as “lusty barbarians” intent on the “business” of “looting, killing and mindless destruction” and “the sport” of rape (Isenberg 149).

For immigrants of Germany and her allies in the United States, the escalating anger of mainstream Americans began to express itself through violence brought on, in part, by the growing belief among mainstream Americans that the European war was now a world-encompassing fight between good and evil; in 1917, an article in the *New Republic* described the mainstream American’s increasingly crusade-minded vision of the war:

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[21] See, Ward, p. 221. See, also, Alvarez, 5 Aug. 2010. For more on Carl Laemmle see, Bradley, pp. 160, 162. Aforementioned German-American Florenz Ziegfield, Jr., also sought to prove his patriotic allegiance to the United States via his professional output; in 1915, as part of his *Ziegfield Follies* stage production, his “American girls had perambulated the stage with headdresses resembling battle ships. In 1917, he mounted a fleet of American warships, ‘steaming through the night with guns and lights flashing’” (Bradley 160).

[22] The McIntosh speech in Springfield, MO, reflects Creel’s Four-Minute Man project, consisting of “patriotic ‘pep talks’” meant to fill the “interval between reels at the well-attended movie theaters.” (Carruth 388) Creel’s ambition for the Four-Minute Man project was to “weld the people of the United States into one white-hot mass instinct with […] deathless determination” (qtd. in Carruth 388).

> His composite picture of the war, set flaming and thundering by newspaper headlines, had become as definitely a drama of good and evil as any medieval vision of the plains of purgatory and the tiers of hell (qtd. in Trask 86).

As a result of this rapidly spreading war zeal, even dachshunds – an easily recognizable dog breed known to be a favorite of the Kaiser – were reportedly stoned in isolated incidents across the country because they were regarded as symbols of German aggression[23] (Ray 16). Eventually, nearly all things relating to Germany – whether towns, food, or animals – were renamed for the duration of the war; dachshunds, for instance, became "liberty pups" (Hazen 68). In a similar vein, German culture and heritage was banned across much of the country; in Arkansas, for example, public and parochial schools eliminated German language instruction because, as the Little Rock school board explained, "the sentiment against anything German has become so keen" (qtd. in Carruth 392).

For some Americans, reported war atrocities committed at the hands of Germany and her allies fed into what they perceived as long-festering social diseases afflicting the American nation; first among these perceived afflictions was the struggle for alcoholic temperance, which pitted reformers against an industry of beer manufacturers largely comprised of successful German-American families, such as the St. Louis, Missouri, based partnership of Eberhard Anheuser and Adolphus Busch.[24] In 1916, an *Atlantic Monthly* report on "The Failure of German-Americanism" cited "opposition to all temperance reforms" as the one activity that "brought [German-Americans] as a body to the attention of the American people" and

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[23] Hatred for all things German was not limited to the United States. An August 15, 1914, article from the English newspaper *The Daily Mirror* relayed the following: "In a side street off the Strand I met a jolly little dachshund – the dachshund might be called the national dog of Germany – walking cheerfully along well-bedecked in red, white, and blue ribbons. And around his neck he wore this label, 'I am a naturalised British subject.' And he seemed mighty proud of the fact, too." (qtd. in Saunders, p. 15).
[24] See, Giordano, pp. 9-10.

“discredited” them “even before [the] war;” the author goes on to say that “[r]esentment against this [anti-temperance] attitude has grown with the phenomenal increase in prohibition sentiment among the American people” (Niebuhr 148). In just one example of the convergence between anti-German and pro-temperance sentiment during the war, the daughter of Adolphus Busch was publicly accused of spying simply because it became known that she owned a wireless set[25] (Fredericks 65).

President Wilson and the CPI played on these inherited animosities toward the German-American community. Wilson, himself, had already begun speaking against the threat of the “hyphenated American” as early as 1915.[26] German-American organizations came under suspicion – particularly the National German-American Alliance, which had attempted to block the re-election of Woodrow Wilson in 1916 and which, according to Creel, had developed a “network of agents” who had infiltrated schools and the press “in order to promote pro-German propaganda” (Johnson, *Culture* 120-5, 136-7). Such scaremongering furthered government efforts to gain control over war sentiment, as well as immigrant and radical factions whose loyalties were deemed questionable, leading Congress to pass a series of laws that provided the Wilson administration with all the necessary power to repress public information and, therefore, shape mainstream public opinion. These laws, including the Espionage Act and the Trading with the Enemy Act, both passed in 1917, and the Sedition Act, passed in 1918, not only enabled the punishment of violators, but encouraged “private vigilante action against dissenters, and denial of mailing privileges to antiwar publications”[27] (Zieger 78). With this newly-endowed power, the

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[25] The set actually belonged to a household servant who was studying how to operate a wireless at the local Y.M.C.A. (Fredericks 65).
[26] See, Kennedy, p. 24.
[27] For more on vigilante acts against alleged anti-war civilians, see, Fredericks, *The Great Adventure*, p. 193.

United States government was able to weaken or destroy numerous radical and immigrant-based groups, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which had challenged the stability of the national status quo over the last decade or more[28](Zieger 197-8). There were even official organizations made up of both male and female agents within the government whose sole purpose was to "monitor and arrest those deemed insufficiently enthusiastic about prosecuting the war" (Zieger 198).

With emotions running high, jazz music seemed to offer an exuberant, homegrown break with the past – an entertaining new popular amusement that owed direct allegiance to none of the European traditions mired in the ravages of war. Music critic Francesco Berger, writing in *Music Record*, related evidence of this sentiment, gleaned from a discussion between himself and an American friend on the value of jazz:

> Having occasion to speak of a Jazz band to an American friend, I thought I was flattering his nationality when I described it as "an admirable performance of profaned art." He promptly replied: "I do not claim for it that it is what has hitherto passed for high art. But you must admit that it has one quality in which much old-world music is sadly wanting, and that is 'character.' It is thoroughly representative of Americanism; as free from conventionality and from 'schools' as my country is free from ancient history and slavery. Better stuff would probably be tamer. It is out of material such as this, brimful of spontaneous national manner, that your refined methods and artificial mannerisms have been evolved. If you take from it what is so obviously its own, including its crudity, you rob it of its distinctive quality; it becomes ordinary, often-told, undesirable" (qtd. in Koenig 134).

[28] "During the war, federal, state, and local law enforcement raided IWW offices in major cities nationwide, and police broke up various IWW-led strikes or assemblies. By the end of the first year of American participation in the war, severe government repression had effectively crushed the IWW as a potential threat" (Schertzing, p. 196).

While the perspective of Berger's American friend was far from universally held in the United States, wartime patriotism made such views common enough for another music critic, Daniel Gregory Mason, writing in *The New Music Review*, to lament:

> In the discussions of "American music" that go on perennially in our newspapers and journals, now waxing in a burst of patriotic enthusiasm […] in war time much stimulated by an enhanced consciousness of nationality […], a sharp cleavage will usually be observed between those whose interest is primarily in the music itself, wherever it comes from, and those in whom artistic considerations give way before patriotic ardor, and propaganda usurp the place of discrimination. One group, in uttering the phrase, "American music," places the stress instinctively on the noun and regards the adjective as only a qualification; the other, in its preoccupation with "American," seems to take "music" rather for granted. Unfortunately the former group constitutes so small a minority, and expresses itself so soberly, that its wholesome insistence on the quality of the article itself is likely to be quite drowned out by the bawling of the advertisers, with their insistent slogan "Made in America" (qtd. in Koenig 121).

Merging with its promotion as a homegrown musical style in the patriotic wake of Wilson's war declaration, jazz also spoke to the adventurous spirit underlying a belief in the promise of war as exotic escapade – Theodore Roosevelt would later refer to the war as "The Great Adventure" – evidenced in the recollections of many young men who enlisted in 1917.[29] For Samuel Meek, who joined the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) following his graduation from Yale, the feeling on campus was "extremely pro-Allies" (qtd. in Berry 88). He describes the student response to Wilson's war declaration as festive:

> The night after war was declared, most of the students marched over to President Pailey's house, chanting, "All out, all out." As I look back on it, I think every member of my fraternity went into one branch of the service or another; it just never entered our heads to stay out (ibid).

[29] This term comes from the 1918 publication of Roosevelt's *The Great Adventure: Present-Day Studies in American Nationalism*.

Another AEF veteran, Arnold Whitridge, recalled initially feeling "as romantically inclined about war as the next man. It seemed so natural to think of the bands and the cheering and to forget about the stark terrors that are really what war is all about" (qtd. in Berry 122). In a similar vein, veteran Lemuel Shepherd recalled the powerful lure of travel, made possible by the war and utilized by his Marine recruiter: "'Gentlemen,' he asked, 'are any of you interested in foreign duty? If you are, we can immediately accommodate you'" (qtd. in Berry 70). Similar experiences were repeated across the country as many Americans – in the words of French General Charles Mangin – "rushed into the fight as to a fete" (qtd. in Berry 88). For many young AEF enlistees, jazz was the soundtrack to their wartime service:

> The doughboy among these old [French] scenes may have been a sacrilege, but he was certainly a very necessary one. And wherever he went, there went his jazz songs, for they were as much part and parcel of his property as his O.D. shirt; and when he rolled his pack for the last time at Hoboken he must have put his music right in, somewhere along with the razor and the extra suit of underwear; and although he may have lost his soap overboard in Brest Harbor, and never seen his towel again after he left La Mans, he managed to stick to his music through thick and thin. No hardship was severe enough, no experience terrible enough to make him forget it (qtd. in Koenig 136).

Good Or Bad, Fad Or Institution?

In many critical descriptions of jazz in this period, the exciting foreignness of the music, which intimated adventure, also held the threat of semi-violent disorientation:

> On certain natures, sound loud and meaningless has an exciting, almost an intoxicating effect, like crude colors and strong perfumes, the sight of flesh or the sadic pleasure in blood (qtd. in Walser 8).

Such readings of the music might have been the result of the aforementioned association between jazz and vice districts, such as Storyville. In the shadow of World War I, the equation of jazz with danger provided an aggressive outlet for the propaganda-stoked war will of the nation,

simultaneously giving voice to the bewildered response some felt toward the industrial and technological advancements responsible for previously undreamt of death and destruction via such science fiction-like weapons as poison gas, airplanes, and armored tanks:

> Critics portrayed the music as incomprehensible noise generated by an out-of-control machine: according to the *New York Sun* of 1917, the trombone 'chokes and gargles,' 'the piano vibrates like a torpedo boat destroyer at high speed,' and 'the drum, labored by a drummer who is surrounded by all the most up-to-date accessories and instruments of torture, becomes the heavy artillery of the piece and makes the performance a devastating barrage[30] (Hersch 181).

However, these advancements were not the only developments of the era causing some to view progress and change with trepidation; the cultural mood of the decade was also one of shock and displacement. The emergence of jazz coincided with a broader cultural shift – exacerbated by the war – toward modernism, in which "an older order was felt to be crumbling down, while new ethical and esthetic values were being promoted. [The cultural output of the moment] was often a confused aspiration for novelty […]"[31] (Rabaté 5). In America, this cultural shift was made tangible by events like the International Exhibition of Modern Art, otherwise known as the 1913 Armory Show, which introduced the American art world to the modern, often avant-garde, art emerging from Europe.[32] In his study, *American Culture in the 1910s*, Mark Whalan summarized the "contrasting reactions" of American visitors to the exhibition:

> On the one hand, [reactions] demonstrated an exhilarated awareness that recent developments in European art had altered the medium in fundamental ways. On the other, [they] expressed a concern which easily morphed into ridicule, a worry that the rapid process of

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[30] For more on the relation of jazz to battlefield noise, see, Johnson, "Disability," pp. 21-2; see, also, Ogren, p. 143-4, for more relating jazz to both battlefield experiences and urban industrialization.
[31] For more on the Armory Show, see, Whalan, pp. 63-7. For more on the development of modernism and its relation to World War I, see, Rabaté, *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*.
[32] For a brief discussion of contrasting contemporary reactions to the Armory Show, see, Bradley, pp. 128-30.

> experiment and innovation which would later be called modernism had turned to strategies of defamiliarisation and abstraction which amounted to a disregard for the general public and a rejection of long-held notions of beauty, morality and technique. These were developments which either threatened or liberated the whole function of art, depending on one's perspective (63).

In the words of one critic, the Armory Show artists demonstrated an execution that was "'capricious,' even 'childish,' while efforts to explain [the artwork] were […] 'mumbo jumbo'" (Bradley 129).

For those threatened by the tenor of the times, the world must have seemed to be quickly and irrevocably unraveling. In the same year that "Livery Stable Blues" debuted to the mainstream American public, news began to arrive from Russia of a Bolshevik revolution that was overthrowing the centuries-old rule of the Tsar, instigating a civil war that eventually led to the death of the Romanov family in 1918 and the creation of the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) in 1922. The Russian Revolution was fueled, in part, by the steadily rising pressures of the Great War, where repeated defeats led to severe food shortages among the already-weakened populace and discontent among Russian troops. This socialist uprising significantly increased the global sense of political insecurity, as the Western world attempted to understand how the status quo of Russia's imperial dynasty could topple so quickly (Murray 15). Even worse, this seemingly anarchic band of revolutionaries was removing Russia from the European war by agreeing to a separate peace with Germany in March, 1918[33] (ibid).

In the United States, the revolution in Russia seemed to confirm mainstream fears of radical groups like the aforementioned I.W.W. Known as Wobblies, members of the Industrial

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[33] As Murray notes, the outrage and fear prevalent among mainstream American reactions to the Bolshevik regime was countered by "[…] great sympathy [which] was immediately forthcoming from many American radicals […] [with] some openly advocate[ing] a similar upheaval in [America]" (16).

Workers of the World were among the most feared and detested marginalized figures of the era. Begun in Chicago in 1905, the I.W.W. sought to unite all American laborers into one giant union, regardless of whether the laborer was skilled or not, "representing a hodgepodge of anarchists, general strike advocates, direct-action Socialists, and syndicalists" [34] (Murray 27). From this hodgepodge, the I.W.W. pursued an aggressive agenda that did not shy away from violence or "direct economic pressure," as evidenced by two of its most well-reported actions – the Lawrence textile strike of 1912 and the Paterson silk strike of 1913 (Murray 27-8).

Although opposed to violent actions, the Socialist party was deemed by many Americans to be just as dangerous in wartime as the I.W.W. Formed in 1901, the Socialist party reached its political peak in 1912 when co-founder Eugene Debs won 6 percent of the popular vote in the presidential race against Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft (Chace 238). When America joined in the European war in 1917, both the I.W.W. and the Socialist party widely and strongly denounced the decision and, amid latent fears of the revolutionary fervor of Russia spreading to the United States, became a prime target for suppression. Eugene Debs was arrested in June 1918 for violating the Espionage Act, was tried and, in September, convicted; he was sentenced to ten years imprisonment, which he served through Christmas Day, 1921 (Murray 25; Chace 274). The Espionage Act was similarly cited in September 1917 when federal raids against leaders of the I.W.W. led to the sentencing, in April, 1918, of ninety-nine Wobblies who received up to twenty years jail time and fines amounting to $2,300,000[35] (Murray 30).

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[34] This put the I.W.W. at odds with the "conservative craft unionism" of the AFL, which refused union privileges to unskilled laborers. See, Murray, pp. 27-9.

[35] Prior to the federal raids in September 1917, I.W.W. members were subjected to numerous vigilante actions, including being "seized, loaded into cattle cars, and shipped hundreds of miles without food or water," being "tarred and feathered" and even murdered. See, Murray, p. 30.

Clearly, mainstream America was not in the mood to humor anything of a radical nature. Yet, jazz music had quickly become a national obsession, its perceived vulgarity tempered by its obvious novelty and a need for distraction. As awareness of jazz spread, however, the national honeymoon with the new musical style quickly devolved into controversy and debate, providing a rallying point from which moral and social reformers, as well as cultural traditionalists, could unite and defend against the radically shifting temperament of the nation.[36] As Carney relates:

> World War I stood as the definitive symbol of this "frenetic era," and a number of writers posited jazz as a music emblematic of this cultural change. One commentator, for example, connected the war with a "revolt against conventions of all sorts – artistic, religious, moral, social, political." In general, critics of jazz argued that the music "represented the manifold paradoxes of modern life: hedonism and urban mechanism, the components of consumption capitalism," and they applied this cultural apprehension to most areas of changing American life (131).

For such Americans, jazz existed as "a threat to [the] community's morals and safety" (Schenbeck 142). With the extraordinary success of "Livery Stable Blues," the press clamored to meet the demands of a public hungry for information on the newest musical fad, publishing quickly-gathered histories and critical evaluations of jazz and the culture that was developing around its performance. What many of these hastily-written jazz exposés revealed was that this seemingly new music, which many feared (or hoped) was the encapsulation of the modern popular American spirit, had not only been around and developing for years, but was also enmeshed in one of the defining historical and political crises of the nation: the question of race relations and equality.

These early reports of jazz were, in many cases, "sensationalist and based in pejorative race and class tropes" (Schenbeck 142). Controversy emerged from their pages as critics and

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[36] One such reformer, Rabbi Stephen Wise, proclaimed: "When America regains its soul, jazz will go" (Carney 131).

readers began to ask who, either generally or specifically, should take credit for creating the jazz style. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band frequently marketed themselves as the "creators of jazz," a statement furthered vociferously by Nick LaRocca (ODJB cornetist) throughout his lifetime.[37] Countering such claims, however, were stories that placed the creation of jazz firmly within the black community. As Lawrence Schenbeck noted, many of these stories – whether celebratory or not – are told from a pejorative racial context, as in the *Literary Digest* article, "Stale Bread's Sadness Gave 'Jazz' to the World," in which Joseph K. Gorham (so-called "Daddy of the Jazz") proclaims:

> […] "jazz" which, in the opinion of Mr. Gorham, has delighted the soul and excited the Terpsichorean tendencies of the Negro of the levee and cotton-fields these many years, drifted out of the shanties and the tango belt of New Orleans back in 1915 to begin its triumphant, blaring, screeching ascent into the ball-room and restaurants of the cultured (qtd. in Koenig 131).

The tendency to present black music as distinct from the "cultured" music of mainstream America was an inheritance, at least in part, of blackface minstrelsy. The minstrel tradition, which began in the 1820s, came to "dominate American vernacular music and entertainment, a domination that persisted well after its 'classic age' (ca. 1840-70) into the early twentieth century" (Schenbeck 61-2). As Schenbeck summarizes, the "central feature" of minstrelsy was its "grotesquely comic caricature of black life," which led to the development of two "principal characters" who encapsulated the prevalent racial stereotypes of the era:

> Jim Crow, the raggedy, devil-may-care bumpkin from the

[37] LaRocca's statements have become somewhat infamous among jazz critics and scholars, but were equally controversial by the mid-1930s. See, Parsonage, p. 135 n.11, 12. Schuller, however, rightly points to ODJB biographer H.O. Brunn as accessory to this misdirection, citing numerous faults in his research that promote the elision of African Americans in the creation of jazz (p. 175 n. 1). According to Brunn, Reisenweber's "felt obliged to blazon, in electric lights that could be seen across Columbus Circle: 'The Original Dixieland Band – Creators of Jazz'" during their groundbreaking engagement at the restaurant in February, 1917 (57).

> plantation, too naïve to realize his position as the fool, and Zip Coon, his ludicrously highfalutin city cousin, strutting boastfully in fancy clothes. These stereotypes endured for decades" (63).

According to Schenbeck, part of the popular appeal for minstrelsy's "core audience of working-class white males" was that it offered:

> […] vicarious release from social decorum through wildly uninhibited stage behavior, and – indeed – an opportunity to laugh at individuals obviously even worse off, less well-equipped to deal with the modern world, than they were (62).

This sense of vicarious release through uninhibited (i.e. uncultured) stage behavior is central to many white critiques of black jazz bands during this period, to an extent presaging the modernist preoccupation in the 1920s with primitivism.[38] One such critique, appearing in *Current Opinion* in 1919, commented:

> It may well be that General Gouraud could find the hideous load of responsibility lightened, perhaps even put aside for the moment, as he listened to [James Reese] Europe's Jazz and that he felt his pulse responding to the virile rhythm, and his emotions joining in the rush of the humorous and carefree mood. Certain it is that our doughboys, fresh from the trenches, with days and weeks of grim endeavor and physical strain behind them, turned to the Jazz furnished by their bands and found in it relaxation and solace and cheer, which enabled them to forget what was past and to abandon themselves wholeheartedly to the joyous hilarity of the present moment (qtd. in Koenig 135).

In his review of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, which was directed by Will Marion Cook and included Sidney Bechet among its personnel, New York-based Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet seems struggling to break away from the conventions typically followed in mainstream reviews of black bands:

> I couldn't tell whether these artists feel it is their duty to be

[38] For some African Americans, the perceived relation between jazz and the minstrel tradition was so pronounced, they denounced the music out of fear it would hinder the social progress of the race (Schenbeck 131).

> sincere, or whether they are driven by the idea that they have a "mission" to fulfill, or whether they are convinced of the "nobility" of their task, or have that holy "audacity" and that sacred "valor" which the musical code requires of our European musicians, nor indeed whether they are animated by any "idea" whatsoever. But I can see that they have a very keen sense of the music they love, and a pleasure in making it which they communicate to the hearer with irresistible force – a pleasure which pushes them to outdo themselves all the time, to constantly enrich and refine their medium[39] (qtd. in Walser 9).

James Reese Europe, Part I

Although the controversy surrounding its origins might suggest otherwise, jazz was not the first popular black musical style to gain national recognition. Beginning roughly in the 1890s, a syncopated style of music began to emerge from Vaudeville and other musical theater venues, with the most successful varieties of the style developing among African American composers and musicians. By the turn of the twentieth century, ragtime was an undoubted hit with mainstream American audiences; with the aid of sheet music, live performances and recordings, names like Scott Joplin – an African American ragtime composer, billed as the "King of Ragtime" – became internationally known and respected (Golden 52-3). By 1909, however, many were questioning whether interest in the music was waning. Prominent musicians, such as John Philip Sousa, openly stated their belief that "the ragtime fad had run its course and was now essentially dead," leading the African American newspaper *The New York Age* to enlist a group of prominent black composers to formulate a response (Badger, *Life* 50). James Reese Europe was among those enlisted to comment on the state of ragtime. Already a highly successful

[39] Cook was "an important composer for the black musical theater who led a series of bands in New York from the turn of the century into the 1920s" (Walser 9). Bechet, a Creole musician from New Orleans very important to early jazz histories, "was among those who left the city around the time of World War I, bringing the music to an international audience. Although he performed on clarinet throughout his career, he was also the first important player of the soprano saxophone, which became his main instrument" (Walser 3).

composer and band leader, at the time of *The New York Age* piece Europe was the musical director for the theatrical comedy *The Red Moon, An American Musical in Red and Black*, written by Bob Cole and J. Rosamond Johnson (Badger, *Life* 38). In a few short years, by 1913, he had not only helped found the Clef Club, which was a "combination booking agency, unofficial union, and social club" for African American musicians, but had also began a series of groundbreaking performances at Carnegie Hall and signed a contract with Victor Records, becoming "the first-known black orchestra to obtain a U.S. recording contract"[40] (Golden 68). While any one of these accomplishments would earn Europe a place in the history of American music, his true claim to popular fame in the prewar years came from his partnership with the husband-and-wife dancing team of Vernon and Irene Castle, who created a nationwide craze for social dancing that helped briefly resuscitate ragtime music in the early part of the decade. The Castles, who met in 1910, became a sensation among New York society as performers and creators of numerous popular dances, such as the "Castle Walk," as well as for setting fashion trends (Irene was particularly significant in this respect, sporting bobbed hair, looser clothing and shorter skirts – more or less, a precursor to the flapper look of the 1920s – several years before these choices became mainstream trends) (Golden 64-7; Giordano 98-9).

It was not until 1913 that the Castles and James Reese Europe met, with Europe quickly assuming the role of bandleader and musical director for the dancing duo. Prior to signing Europe's Society Orchestra, the Castles danced to whatever orchestra was provided by the venue at which they were scheduled to appear, a setup that necessitated they "create their dances without musical accompaniment" (Badger, *Life* 83). Once in partnership with Europe, however, dances could be created in tandem with the orchestra and Europe, himself, composed dozens of

[40] Carnegie Hall cites Europe's 1912 concert as the first jazz concert given at the venue; see, Carnegie Hall, "What was the first jazz concert."

highly successful ragtime numbers, such as “Castle House Rag” and “The Castle Doggy Fox Trot,” as accompaniment to their dances.[41] Despite the overwhelming success of their partnership, the Castles’ decision to hire an African American orchestra created controversy, which, by 1913, “reached the level of a full-fledged national debate”[42] (Badger, *Life* 82). In many ways, the spark of this debate began twenty years earlier, when conservative music critics responded with hostility to statements made by Czech composer Antonin Dvořák, who arrived in New York City in 1892 to head the National Conservatory of Music. In an 1893 article in the *New York Herald*, which discussed the future prospects of American music, Dvořák famously stated his opinion that Americans should “look to their own native music as a foundation” for the creation of a distinctly American musical tradition (Candelaria and Kingman 289). This statement, which was “in effect a challenge to American composers,” named both Native American and African American melodies as a valuable source of American folk traditions; of African American music, in particular, Dvořák remarked: “In the Negro Melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music”[43] (qtd. in Peress 9). For the conservative majority, many of whom were intent on crafting a national music to rival the European tradition of Mozart or Beethoven, it was unconscionable that the music of the United States should be based on what Dvořák referred to as “Negro melodies” and, for a time,

[41] It is interesting to note, as Parsonage does, that Nick LaRocca credits the Castles – though not Europe – with “provoking the development of the ODJB style” (134).
[42] An example of the backlash experienced by the Castles and Europe upon their partnership occurred early in 1914, when the Musician’s Union filed an objection against the Castles for including a “colored orchestra” in their act at William Hammerstein’s club at the Victoria Theater, New York City. See, Golden, pp. 77.
[43] Dvořák’s awareness of African American music grew, at least in part, from his association with individuals like Harry T. Burleigh, an African American baritone assigned to be Dvořák’s student assistant in New York. See, Peress, pp. 20-4.

newspapers and journals were full of the debate[44] (Abbott and Seroff 274). Two decades later, the significant African American influence on ragtime led some to suggest that Dvořák's statement had "achieved the aura of prophecy," with colleagues like James Huneker citing Dvořák's influence on American music as the culprit behind what he deemed the detrimental popularity of ragtime (Abbott and Seroff 274). As would be the case with jazz a mere handful of years later, conservative critics of ragtime dance denigrated the music, calling it "exalt[ed] noise, rush and street vulgarity," comparing it to "a criminal novel" that is "full of bangs and explosions, devised in order to shake up the overworked mind"[45] (Golden 52). In bringing ragtime music and social dance together, performers like Europe and the Castles united "conservative music educators [and] critics" with equally conservative social reformers and church leaders in their dislike of the popular trend (Badger, *Life* 83). As Abbott and Seroff note, to "diehard defenders of the Western musical canon, including many educated black musicians and music lovers, [ragtime] represented an unacceptable departure" from "classical norms"[46] (451).

However, as a departure from the norm, ragtime was quietly breaking new ground for African American musicians. While scholars, such as Danielle Robinson, note "the vestiges of minstrelsy in ragtime sheet music," indicating that the music "had to be marketed as a continuation of minstrelsy, at least in some contexts, in order to be successfully sold to mainstream consumers," ragtime afforded musicians like James Reese Europe access – albeit

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[44] Prominent American composer Edward MacDowell, for one, rejected Dvořák's suggestions, stating: "[…] what Negro melodies have to do with Americanism in art still remains a mystery" (qtd. in Peress 25). For more on the critical response generated by "The Dvořák Statement," see, Abbott and Seroff, p. 274.

[45] The relationship of Europe's pre-war recordings to jazz will be discussed further on.

[46] There is even evidence suggesting James Reese Europe's own family were among those decrying the ragtime trend. See, Badger, *Life*, p. 46-50.

with caveats – to the national stage (109). Given the similarities in mainstream reactions to ragtime and jazz during the 1910s, it is tempting to label the pre-war musical output of Europe as jazz; in fact, his position in the jazz narrative has always been problematic; as biographer Reid Badger states: "[…] like the era to which he belonged, [Europe] was a transitional figure, and like all transitional figures difficult to place"[47] (*Life* 228). The difficulty in placing Europe's music does not, however, solely arise from the transitional relationship between ragtime and jazz during this period. Though less significant than the overlapping stylistic developments occurring in popular dance music, Europe's eclectic musical interests further clouded the question of categorization. At the beginning of Europe's legendary association with the Castles, the concept of jazz music was largely unknown and, by 1914, Europe's reputation was firmly established in the public mind in relation to ragtime "Negro dance music" (Welburn 36). He was, however, equally active among African American symphony orchestras, which further blurred his musical position in the literature of the day. In this 1914 piece from the *New York Evening Post*, for instance, the review of Europe's Negro Symphony Orchestra concert at Carnegie Hall drifts from discussions of popular dance music to discussions of symphonic music that call the Dvořák controversy to mind; as Ron Welburn relates, the article:

> […] referred to Europe as "one of the most remarkable" musicians in America whose organization "practically controls the furnishing of music for the new dances." The anonymous reporter was impressed by Europe's single-handed ability to do what many whites felt was impossible, "[to adapt] negro music and musicians to symphonic purposes"[48] (37).

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[47] Schuller called Europe "the most important transitional figure in the pre-history of jazz on the East Coast" (249).

[48] In an interview, Europe explained that the Carnegie Hall musicians were actually pulled from his dance band: "As yet we [black musicians] have scarcely begun to think of supporting ourselves by symphonic playing. The members of the orchestra are all members of my staff of

Having primarily established himself in the field of ragtime dance several years before jazz became a mainstream craze, Europe lacked the novelty and shock value – as well as the sheer power of utilizing the term "jazz" – that helped launch the jazz craze; as Welburn relates, his pre-war successes were "overshadowed by the rise of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band" (42).

Fit To Fight

Then, too, there is the issue of race. In 1917, as the nation prepared for war, a series of race-related incidents, including a Houston, Texas, riot involving army personnel, demonstrated the effects (and potential threats) of wartime pressures on a tensely segregated society. The Houston riot involved a number of African American troops – the Third Battalion of the Twenty-fourth Infantry – who had recently returned from the search for Pancho Villa in New Mexico (Haynes 14-5). Prior to that, the Third Battalion had been fighting in the Spanish-American War and serving in both Mexico and the Philippines (Haynes 10-4). Once war was declared, these men were sent to Houston-based Camp Logan, arriving on July 28 to safeguard construction needed for the war effort (Haynes 15-6). According to accounts, there were several strained encounters between the soldiers and local civilians; as Robert Haynes argues, "[…] prominent Houstonians of both races worked hard to uphold the fiction of racial harmony," but there was palpable racial tension, aggravated by longstanding police abuse of African Americans that went unchecked by city officials and citizens alike[49] (32). Verbal abuse and false arrests were a familiar aspect of life for Houston's resident black population, which was the largest urban concentration of blacks in Texas at the time (Haynes 23). On August 23, after a member of the

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dance musicians who play at most of the principal hotels and private dances […]" (qtd. in Welburn 38).

[49] Haynes provides the example of a policeman putting a gun to the head of an African American who was late with his delivery of ice; the policeman went so far as to pull the trigger before the deliveryman realized the gun was not loaded (84).

Third Battalion was arrested under questionable circumstances, approximately 100 African American soldiers mutinied, which resulted in the Houston riot[50] (Haynes 94-170). In early December, after a lengthy court-martial, thirteen of these men were found guilty and hanged "before the public knew of the verdicts and before the president and the secretary of war had reviewed and approved them" (Haynes 7). The Houston riot was one of many recent events leading Secretary of War Newton Baker to question the preparedness of American soldiers to present a unified front against Germany and the Central Powers.[51]

Baker was also troubled by the report made by Robert Fosdick regarding the "moral readiness" of troops stationed in the southwest during the Pancho Villa raids of 1916 – the same region where the Third Battalion had served prior to arriving at Camp Logan (Keire 105). The Fosdick report claimed that "alcohol abuse, prostitution, and venereal disease were rampant" (Bristow 5). In attempting to control the myriad threats at play within the nation, the Wilson administration again used the instability of war to claim new governing powers. Just as the CPI tried to control images of the nation at war, the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) – a collective effort of the armed forces and the "top anti-vice reformers" of the Progressive Era – sought to "safeguard the moral and physical health" of enlisted men and draftees (Keire 105).

In August, 1917, as part of the nationwide effort spearheaded by Secretary of War Baker and Fosdick, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels threatened to close down any vice district

[50] Ann Collins notes that tensions in Houston were probably heightened by "the recent atrocities of the East St Louis race riot," which was being followed by the Third Battalion via press coverage in African American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender* (157 n.91).
[51] See, Zieger, pp. 103-4, and, Keith, p. 122-3. Additionally, while the Houston riot raised concerns among officials in the U.S. Army, it raised equal concern among many African Americans who questioned whether black men had any obligation to fight for a segregated nation. See, Davis, p. 480.

within five miles of a naval installation, fearing the entertainments available in such districts would lead United States sailors morally astray – possibly leading to the more practical problem of seeing numerous sailors debilitated by such common vice-district diseases as syphilis.[52] Subsumed within this edict against vice districts was a telltale statement regarding the perceived relationship between vice and jazz; according to Fosdick, for American soldiers to be "Fit to Fight," jazz music "must be toned down" (McGerr 297). As previously indicated, Storyville was among the vice districts immediately threatened with closure and, after numerous attempts by city leaders to stay the ban, was ordered to close by midnight, November 12, 1917, by order of the mayor of New Orleans (Ostransky 59). Whether scholars agree on the significance of Storyville in the creation of jazz or not, this closure – which coincided with the jazz fad currently sweeping the nation thanks to "Livery Stables Blues" – changed the cultural landscape of New Orleans, encouraging many musicians to look elsewhere for work. By the time record scouts, hoping to capitalize on the newest fad, began scouring New Orleans for jazz bands that could be added to their company label, they found there were "no jazz bands" left in the city (Brooks 343). As Philip Larkin suggested, "someone should have told [them] that since Storyville closed the previous October, New Orleans was a bad bet" (75).

However, even before the unimaginable success of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band or the closure of Storyville, several jazz musicians had already started to move beyond the confines

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[52] "Focusing on the health of the recruits medicalized the anti-vice movement. Reformers abandoned the interlocking economic arguments against the Vice Trust and began defining prostitution as a medical problem of diseased individuals, specifically disease-spreading women [….] According to the new strictures, both the military and civilian police could apprehend anyone they suspected of suffering from venereal disease ….] Over the course of the war, the CTCA interned 15,520 women in federally funded reformatories and detention houses" (Keire 108-9). For more on the internment of women during World War I, see, Hodges, "'Enemy Aliens' and 'Silk Stocking Girls': The Class Politics of Internment in the Drive for Urban Order during World War I," pp. 431-58.

of New Orleans. For many black musicians, the movement away from the Crescent City was part of a larger exodus north – the Great Migration -- which saw the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of men and women seeking greater socio-economic opportunities and the hope of greater personal freedom and safety beyond the borders of the Jim Crow South. The movement was, in part, a response to the increased demand for war manufacturing and the simultaneous decrease in newly-arriving immigrant labor from Europe, both of which were due to the start of World War I in 1914; although neutral, the United States made and sold millions worth of war materiel to belligerent nations at a time when European countries were curbing national emigration in an effort to fill-out their military ranks (Palmer 54; Hennessey 28-9). Beyond this economic exigency, however, were myriad personal factors that pushed individuals away from the South, pulling them toward the comparatively rich and supportive African American communities taking root ever northward. Chicago was, in many ways, at the center of this movement, one particular reason being the widespread dissemination of the *Chicago Defender*. There were several weekly and monthly African American newspapers, including *The Broad Ax* and *The Crisis*, which influenced northward migration, "their profiles of black businessmen and educators, their advertisements for events and products, open[ing] doors that many of their readers never knew existed" (Hagedorn 311). The *Chicago Defender*, however, achieved national levels of notoriety in 1915 when it began printing the antilynching slogan "If you must die, take at least one with you," which caused the paper to be banned in many Southern cities – a situation averted by Pullman porters (a traditionally African American occupation) who developed ways to secretly deliver copies of the paper to communities throughout the South (Rice 8). From this point on, the popularity of the *Defender* among black communities grew exponentially, helping draw blacks from the South to Chicago; "[b]y 1920, over 100,000

African-Americans lived in Chicago, an increase of 148 percent in ten years"[53] (Kenney 12). Among this number were "[m]ost of the city's South Side jazz performers," almost half of whom arrived "during or just after World War I" (ibid). The cultural momentum of jazz was moving away from its infancy in New Orleans, toward the more accessible national scene of Chicago.

James Reese Europe, Part II

Back in New York City, while the Original Dixieland Jazz Band prepared to appear at Reisenweber's and Secretary of War Baker worried over the moral and physical state of his troops, James Reese Europe was busy organizing the band of the 15th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard, which he had enlisted with in September, 1916 (Badger, *Life* 141). He decided to enlist before the United States officially entered World War I, believing the regiment could "build up the moral and physical Negro manhood of Harlem" (Harris 49). There was also the imperative of doing one's patriotic duty, bluntly stated in the newspaper advertisements that were "placed in African-American newspapers around the country": "AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MUSICIANS – Crack Colored Musicians […] write or wire Lieut. Jas. Reese Europe, 15th Infantry Armory, 2217 7th Av., N.Y." (Harris 74). Then, too, his early enlistment could have also been encouraged by the example set by friends and colleagues, such as Vernon Castle who, born and raised in England, felt compelled to enlist in December 1915, joining the Eighty-fourth Royal Canadian Flying Corps Squadron[54] (Golden 143).

When the United States declared war on Germany in 1917, the 15th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard became the 369th Infantry Regiment of the American

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[53] It has been estimated that, during World War I, "two-thirds of the *Defender*'s readers lived in the South. Since its circulation was around 200,000 and it was estimated by the *Defender* that in these homes and churches five people read each copy, this weekly paper probably reached more than 650,000 people in the South" (Wang, p. 102).
[54] Vernon Castle was killed in a flight training incident on February 15, 1918, at Beamsville Aerodrome, Toronto, Canada (Golden 195-6).

Expeditionary Force, an all-black battalion attached to the French Army in an effort to deter racism (Candelaria and Kingman 247). Better known as the Harlem "Hellfighters," the 369th was the first African American battalion to see combat in France and earned several war decorations, including the French Croix de Guerre (Golden 132; Badger, *Life* 187). For his own part, Europe was reportedly "the first African-American officer to lead troops into combat [….] [and] also very likely the first to cross no-man's land and participate in a raid on the German lines" (Badger, *Life* 180). Additionally, Europe's regimental band created a sensation as they toured France and England, providing European audiences with their first live exposure to the syncopated rhythms of American popular music; for many Europeans, the experience was electrifying.[55] Indeed, the response of one group of professional French musicians highlighted the unfathomable qualities of this new music so well, the story became legendary. As Europe, himself, recalled in a 1919 interview:

> After the [Paris, 1918] concert was over the leader of the band of the Garde Républicain came over and asked me for the score of one of the jazz compositions we had played. He said he wanted his band to play it. I gave it to him, and the next day he again came to see me. He explained that he couldn't seem to get the effects I got, and asked me to go to a rehearsal. I went with him. The great band played the composition superbly – but he was right: the jazz effects were missing. I took an instrument and showed him how it could be done, and he told me that his own musicians felt sure that my band had used special instruments. Indeed, some of them, afterward attending one of my rehearsals did not believe what I had said until after they had examined the instruments used by my men (qtd. in Southern 240).

Europe's regimental band was not only a success among Europeans. As Bradley relates:

> Jazz, only beginning to be heard by white audiences at the beginning of the war, spread through the troops by way of small groups and

[55] "Between February 12 and March 17, 1918, the Fifteenth Regimental Band traveled over two thousand miles, performing for French, British, and American troops and French civilians in some twenty-five cities" (Badger, "Prehistory" 56).

> regimental bands, and soon had the imprimatur of a new *American* art. Beloved performers became living representations of the yearning for home[56] (156).

According to "theatrical producers Winthrop Ames and Edward H. Southern," the success of Europe's band as "the best entertainment in France" was due to the fact that it was "so typically American" (Bradley 168). Like the rest of America, James Reese Europe was now talking about popular music – and his own performances – in terms of jazz; as he put it: "While society once 'ragged,' they now 'jazz'" (qtd. in Southern 348). The new music was gaining some credence as a balm to war-weary humanity, what one critic would later refer to as "a wholesome tonic" (qtd. in Koenig 272). Noble Sissle, who would record with the Hellfighters band in 1919, recalled thinking, "when the band had finished and the people were roaring with laughter, their faces wreathed in smiles, I was forced to say that this is just what France needs at this critical time"[57] (Badger, "Prehistory of Jazz," 56).

After more than eighteen months of involvement in the Great War, Americans on the battlefield and the home front learned that the conflict would end at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918. For many troops, word came via strips of paper, distributed by unit captains, tersely stating: "Cease firing on all fronts. 11/11/11. Gen. John J. Pershing" (Hagedorn 3). In the United States, cables reached the State Department at 2:25 a.m. and the press was informed roughly twenty minutes later (Hagedorn 5). As Ann Hagedorn relates, millions took to the streets celebrating the news of peace: "they opened windows and unfurled flags, stood on rooftops tossing the shredded pages of telephone books, built bonfires with anything made of wood that

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[56] Bradley also discusses how the war "expanded the audience for popular culture to the thousands of young men recruited from the country's farms and crossroads" that helped "make possible the national audience necessary for radio as a broad-based entertainment vehicle" (156-7).

[57] For more on Sissle, star of vaudeville and Broadway, as well as composer (with creative partner Eubie Blake) of such hits as *Shuffle Along*, see, Brooks, pp. 363-95.

could be easily detached, and waded through ankle-deep confetti, waving newspaper" (7). Across the country, crowds of thousands broke into impromptu singing and dancing, many overpowered by feelings of hope. As W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, "The nightmare is over. The world awakes. The long, horrible years of dreadful night are passed. Behold the sun!" (Hagedorn 3). Among the first troops to return from the war on February 17, 1919, Lieutenant Europe and the men of Harlem's 369th were accorded the unprecedented honor of progressing through the streets of New York City – the white sections, as well as the black – in a ticker-tape parade. They were "the first fighting unit of World War I to parade in New York" (Badger, *Life* 3). The significance of the welcome afforded the Harlem "Hellfighters" is suggested in a reminiscence recorded by Badger in his biography of Europe:

> Bernard Katz, a schoolboy who had no idea what the parade was about but was drawn to Fifth Avenue by the sounds of a marching band, immediately noticed something unusual. "Most of the other parades," he recalled, "came down Fifth Avenue – this one was moving uptown!" (4).

Unlike all previous parades in the city, this parade was moving toward Harlem and the African American community, not away from it.

Newspapers of every variety detailed the triumphant progression of the Harlem "Hellfighters" up Fifth Avenue that day; whether writing for a mainstream or minority audience, a spirit of pride and inclusion infused their descriptions. One white bystander was quoted as saying, "I'm taking off without asking the boss, for I just had to see these boys. I never will get another opportunity to see such a sight and I can get another job" (Badger, *Life* 5). In the *Atlantic Monthly*, an article titled "Some Experiences with Colored Soldiers" encouraged the "white citizen" to "remember the lovely traits of his colored brother," concluding with the injunction:

> Let us hold out our hands and open our hearts to these wonderful boys who move among us, remembering that white and black lie

> side by side in the fields “over there” (qtd. in Trask 144).

Even Jewish newspapers editorialized on the parade, with one writer for the *Jewish Daily News* suggesting the shame of the nation if the sacrifices of these African American troops were forgotten and society returned to its prejudiced practices of segregation and worse; the editorial stated, “Color, after all, is of no consequence” (ibid). Many of these various sources reported on the music performed during the parade through New York City, citing that the band played “dignified marching music” that began with the French “Marche du Regiment de Sambre et Meuse” through the wealthier neighborhoods. However, upon reaching Lenox Avenue – the famed entryway to Harlem – the regimental band began playing the popular song “Here Comes My Daddy Now;” according to *The New York Age,* the crowd’s response to this musical and physical homecoming “bordered on a riot” (Badger, *Life* 7-8).

Though the unfettered acceptance shown the parading “Hellfighters” on that February day in 1919 was an aberration amid the decades of continuing racism and segregation that African Americans would undergo in the United States, something significant was achieved by Europe and the regimental band he headed. For, although the jazz recordings of the ODJB and others preceded the arrival of the 369th in France and England, it was “Jim Europe’s and his assistant’s (Gene Mikell) arrangements of American popular songs, marches, ragtime, and blues that brought the sound of live jazz to Europe” (Badger, *Life* 7). Moreover, the “Hellfighters” were performing before cross-sections of French, British and American society, concentrated and intermingled in a fashion made possible only by the exigencies of the war. Having gained the approval of French and British audiences, Europe and his military band began to alter the jazz debate in America, suggesting that something positive might emerge from the jazz style:

> As important as it was for Americans to believe that their country could produce a concert band that was superior in musicianship

> to the great national military bands of Italy, France, and England, it was perhaps more flattering to the national ego to celebrate Jim Europe's band as the first internationally recognized exporter of a new American cultural art, a new musical idiom that was being labeled *jazz* (ibid).

By the time of his return to the United States, plans were underway for a national tour of the "Hellfighters" band. In addition, Europe and his musicians were signed to "an exclusive recording contract" with Pathé Record Company, which began billing Lieutenant Europe as the "Jazz King"[58] (Badger, "Prehistory" 58).

The reaction of mainstream America to James Reese Europe and his returning regimental band also helped to allay the fears of the African American middle class. The success of the "Hellfighters" band in France, playing alongside several of the top military bands in Europe, encouraged Americans to see jazz music as more than purposefully-provocative noise. It helped that Europe and his band, now hailed as heroes, were also highly professional musicians. At the time, the trend among mainstream jazz musicians was to downplay any signs of musical training or professionalism, in part as a way to break with inherited expectation that successful musicians were professionally educated, preferably in Europe (Ogasapian and Orr 72). Just as many Americans were confused by the modernism of the 1913 Armory Show, wondering how the art could be "'understood' when craft (ostensibly) was not the criteria," so, too, many Americans were confused by any call to take jazz seriously when the musicians claimed unabashedly to be untrained[59] (Bradley 130). Bands like the ODJB bragged about their supposed lack of formal musical knowledge, as when LaRocca falsely stated: "None of us can read a note of music and

[58] For a brief discussion regarding why Europe did not sign with one of the two major record labels (Victor and Columbia), see Brooks, p. 280.
[59] It may be interesting to note that, following the triumphant parade through New York City, Europe and the Hellfighters band were treated to a night of "dinner and speeches and music" at the 34th Street armory, site of the 1913 Armory Show. See, Hagedorn, p. 99.

we do not intend to learn" (Parsonage 136). It became the fashionable thing for white jazz musicians to claim a lack of technical know-how during these early years, creating the myth of the jazz genius. According to Catherine Parsonage, this desire to stress "musical illiteracy" stemmed from a need "to prove their natural ability and spontaneous approach [to jazz], a feature normally associated with the oral tradition of black musicians" (135). By contrast, the bands overseen by James Reese Europe – now the most famous African American bandleader in America – were exceptional technical musicians; according to Eubie Blake, a composer and creative associate of Noble Sissle, the "Europe gang were absolute [music] reading sharks. They could read a moving snake and if a fly lit on that paper he got played" (Badger, *Life* 135). Although, by now, Europe had a well-publicized reputation for professionalism thanks to his pre-war work, his band did sometimes play on the mainstream expectation of encountering "untrained, primitive musicians" who "couldn't read music but had a natural talent for it" by memorizing the latest popular songs and playing them – seemingly by ear (ibid). The illusion went so far that, when taking requests from an audience, Europe would "ask customers to whistle a few bars, and then 'confer' with the musicians" in order to appear to figure out the requested song (Kenney 42).

Culturally and morally, jazz music had little to recommend it to conservative American tastes. Yet, again, American involvement in the Great War helped to temper contentious reactions. For a start, jazz music became singularly identified with American soldiers fighting overseas. As was the case for many European troops, thousands of American soldiers were first exposed to jazz through military bands, like the "Hellfighters," who were incorporating syncopated popular songs into their repertoire (Bradley 166). During the course of American

involvement in the war, the very idea of jazz became fused to a patriotic ideal, as suggested in this piece from 1919:

> [The war] took a portion of this [American] melting pot product, chosen indiscriminately, transported it to Europe and there threw it into a clear relief against a strange foreign background, something never before done on a large scale. And in this way we were able to observe some of its qualities [….] the music the doughboy rolled in [his] pack […] was a thing American, somehow characteristically bound up with our national life. Traces of the Negro in it […] a bit of the wild free breath of the Indian too, here and there a splotch of Spanish coloring and occasionally a reminiscence of Irish and Scottish forbears. But in the main its principal element is just plain American and its rhythms are the rhythms of our American life. France brought that out if it did nothing else (qtd. in Koenig 138).

Scanning the pages of the wartime Army publication *The Stars and Stripes*, which was produced specially for troops serving in France, the homesickness and pride jazz engendered among many American soldiers is readily apparent. For example, in an amateur poem, titled "Jazz in Barracks," published anonymously on March 29, 1918, the first two stanzas state:

> I can stand their hiking or their firing / on the range
> I can walk a lonesome post or do K.P.;
> Nothing in this army life to me is new / or strange, -
> I'm as seasoned and as hardened as can / be.
> Yet, with all my boasted toughness there/ is one thing I can't stand,
> Though over all of Europe I may roam;
> When a ham piano-artist bangs the box / to beat the band,
> Playing jazz – oh gee! It's then I long / for home
>
> For that raggy stuff reminds me of the / dances I have had,
> Of the parties in the good old U.S.A.;
> There is some that makes me happy, but / there's more that makes me sad,
> And it haunts me all the night and all / the day,
> Oh, it's jazz, jazz, jazz, till my nerves / are on the frazz
> From a-trying to forget what it recalls;
> I try to flee the sound, but it follows me around
> And re-echoes from the barracks' stony / walls
> (7).

A similar sense of jazz as a link to home suffuses the July 19, 1918, piece titled "That Yankee Band," in which engineer E.P. Bradstreet, Jr., wrote that "the greatest treat during the entire time we have been in France" was when an American band stationed in a neighboring town put on a concert:

> When that jazz music started, we tried to look unconscious, but it was only for a minute, and then we paired off and, in hob-nailed shoes on a rough sod, danced our fool selves tired for the first time since we left the banks of the old Mississippi last July (8).

Finally, American pride in jazz can be discerned in an entry from July 19, 1918, titled "Doughboy Troupe Shines in Chorus," when, while discussing an entertainment revue recently organized by the British, the anonymous writer finishes the paragraph with the simple, yet evocative statement: "But no one in the British Army wrote the music the jazz band played" (3). The battlefields of Europe created a perceived need for jazz that would have been highly unlikely to develop otherwise; as Bradley suggests, "[j]azz, once so coupled with the interzone clubs of city life in prewar America, became accepted as a result of wartime emphasis on music and morale" (167). For many American and European soldiers, jazz – with its "emphasis upon the personal, immediate, and kinetic (as opposed to the presumably authoritative and eternal virtues of the European musical tradition)" – became an important outlet that expressed the unfamiliar landscape of wartime life (Badger, *Life*, 196). Faced with the overwhelmingly positive response of European audiences and the interest of returning troops, moral arbiters and cultural critics in America had to contend with the possibility that jazz was becoming more than a popular entertainment fad.

Furthering the impetus to consider jazz as a serious form of American music was the triumphant return of James Reese Europe and the Harlem "Hellfighters" band, which lasted well

beyond the parade up Fifth Avenue. By taking on the mantle of war hero and conquering musician, Europe was slaying the minstrel-based image attached to African American music while, as Badger put it, making “jazz safe for democracy” (229). He had become a leader in the racial uplift of African American music. The sheet music produced in conjunction with Europe’s post-war recordings clearly illustrates the respect many white Americans were willing to accord him and his “Hellfighters” band; one such piece, “On Patrol in No Man’s Land,” displays a panoramic photograph of the entire “Hellfighters” band on stage with a close-up cut-out portrait of Europe in military uniform looking confidently into the camera. This dignified and professional image contrasts sharply with earlier sheet music offerings by Europe, such as the 1905 composition “Obadiah (You Took Advantage of Me)” that features stereotypical minstrel-inspired caricatures of African Americans, including the popular image of the black mammy archetype. James Reese Europe epitomized the height of the briefly held postwar interest in returning African American troops, but there were other, more problematic examples, such as the January, 1919, Columbia Records release of “Dixie Song,” which was promoted as a “real tribute” to African American troops – a record “with a decidedly novel slant. ‘Instead of picking melons off the vine, they’re picking Germans off the Rhine’” (Miller, *Pretty Bubbles* 27-8). Despite the complicated response of mainstream America toward returning African American soldiers, the “Hellfighters” parade and the mainstream success of James Reese Europe have been cited as “the symbolic emergence of the ‘New Negro’ movement” that would generate the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and help to inspire the Civil Rights movement of a later generation[60] (Hagedorn 100). However, the promise of Europe’s postwar career, both in the

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[60] Robert Abbott, editor of the *Chicago Defender*, welcomed home returning black soldiers with an injunction: “We who remained at home expect much of you. The same fighting spirit which you displayed upon the battlefields of Europe is needed in the titanic struggle for survival

African American community specifically and American culture generally, was dramatically cut short when, on May 9, 1919, he was stabbed and killed by drummer Herbert Wright during a backstage confrontation at the Mechanics Hall in Boston, Massachusetts. Coverage of the murder was carried nationwide, with editorials in black and white newspapers referring to Europe as the "King of Jazz" (Hagedorn 199; Badger, *Life*, 217). The funeral was an elaborate event, including a procession through Harlem and the first public memorial service held for an African American in New York City history; condolences streamed in from across the nation, as well as overseas (Hagedorn 200). For African Americans, especially, the loss of Europe's contribution to jazz was deeply felt. The editor of the *Chicago Defender* wrote that Europe was "jazzing away the barriers of prejudice" (ibid). Another editorial in the New York *Clipper* stated:

> Jim, the "King of Jazz" of Broadway. He was only a black man, was Jim – outside – but they laid him away as though he had belonged to the more fortunate race….Hereafter, jazz music will mean more to us than it ever did before (Badger, *Life*, 220).

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through which we are passing in this country today [….] You left home to make the world a safer place for democracy and your work will have been in vain if it does not make your own land a safer place for you and yours. If you have been fighting for democracy, let it be a *real democracy*, a democracy in which the blacks can have equal hope, equal opportunities and equal rewards with the whites. Any other sort of democracy spells failure" (qtd. in Hagedorn, p. 103).

Chapter 2:

Blood and Thunder

"Although dime novels have frequently been derided and are rarely read today, they helped to shape some of the most important genres of US mass culture, including the romance, the detective story, the Western, science fiction, and stories of war and imperial adventure, as new media adapted and transformed their stories for the twentieth century." – Shelly Streeby, "Dime Novels and the Rise of Mass-Market Genres," p. 587.

"It cannot be pretended that the American detective story revealed anything like the quantity or the level of quality of its English counterpart in the years up to the first world conflagration." – Howard Haycraft, *Murder for Pleasure*, pp. 101-2.

"The detective story is surely one of the most important popular myths of modernity." – John G. Cawelti, *Mystery, Violence, and Popular Culture*, p. 364.

Books For The Million!

Just as American popular music was transitioning from ragtime to jazz in the late-1910s, a similar evolution was taking place in the realm of popular literature. In 1915, the dime novel industry, which had arguably "dominated American publishing during the last part of the nineteenth century," was quickly fading into nostalgia as the last of the original dime novel stories was issued in the United States[61] (Dizer 74). A century earlier, with the 1814 introduction of the steam-powered printing press in Britain, story papers – often referred to as "bloods" (short for "blood and thunder"), "penny dreadfuls" or "penny bloods" in England – began the trend for cheaply printed, often lurid fiction[62] (DeForest 13). Taking their popular names from the "[penny] price and front page illustration depicting a moment of high drama and bloodshed," English story papers quickly became infamous for their tales of murder and scandal (Haining 9-10). In the United States, story papers were typically "four-to-eight-page tabloids with names like *New York Ledger* or *Saturday Night* – newspapers that printed double-columns of fiction rather than news" and, until the mid-1800s, often contained little original content, relying instead on cheaper options, such as reprinting plagiarized English stories[63] (DeForest 13-4). Not all American story papers were marketed as sensational literature; titles like *The Fireside Companion* offered highly gendered "family-oriented" fiction, consisting of:

> […] romances for the women of the household, westerns and

[61] For more relating to dime novels as nostalgia, see Cox, *Companion*, p. xxii: "The dime novel became a thing of nostalgia, collected by the men who read them when they were boys." See, also, Worden, p. 19: "By 1922, dime novels had become objects […] of wistful nostalgia when Dr. Frank P. O'Brien's dime-novel collection was put on exhibit at the New York Public Library."

[62] Story paper publishing content varied from the likes of Charles Dickens to *Varney the Vampire* (DeForest 14).

[63] DeForest notes other money saving measures common among American story paper publishers, such as plagiarizing from American competitors or simply changing "the title and character names of a story and print[ing] it a second or third or fourth time" (14).

> adventure yarns for the men, and for the younger folks, juvenile stories – everything from [Horatio] Alger-type success stories sprinkled with adventure to war and western stories[64] (LeBlanc 19).

With their easily identified covers taken up with "a huge black-and-white-illustration," and something, ostensibly, for the whole family, story papers became hugely popular in America, with approximately 80 titles appearing between 1830 and 1921 (LeBlanc 19; Cox, *Companion* xv).

In the late-1850s, due to the voracious demand of the reading public, American publishers began to rely more consistently on original material, although much of their content initially continued to arrive from England – in 1859, for instance, "the *New York Ledger* paid Charles Dickens $5,000 for the rights to his newest work" (DeForest 14). It was during this time that dime novels arrived on the American scene. Initially, as J. Randolph Cox notes, "the term 'dime novel' was a brand name" (*Companion* xiii). In 1860, hoping to capitalize on the demand for cheap, entertaining literature, brothers Erastus and Irwin Beadle began publishing *Beadle's Dime Novels*, a series of publications consisting of:

> […] paper-covered booklets, published at regular intervals, and numbered in sequence. For 14 years, a new title was issued by the publishers, Beadle and Adams, every two weeks or so, 321 in all. Each booklet was approximately 4 by 6 inches in cover size and was about 100 pages long. Each contained a work of fiction, a short novel, with a sensational and melodramatic plot, that sold for ten cents. The cover illustration, as much as the low price, attracted readers and sold the books […] (ibid).

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[64] Of these purportedly more wholesome story papers, those written for boys were particularly popular, as evidenced by the array of titles offered, including *Boys of New York*, *Young Men of America*, *Golden Hours*, and *Happy Days* (LeBlanc 19). According to Tony Goodstone, even family story papers were "lurid […] product[s] of competition among newspapers, which tempted their readers with new attractions, including fictional narratives about vice. Family [s]tory [p]apers offered, according to one publisher, 'plenty of sensation and no philosophy'" (ix).

From the publication of their very first dime novel, the Beadle brothers advertised in newspapers like the *New York Tribune*, attracting readers with slogans such as "BOOKS FOR THE MILLION!" and "A DOLLAR BOOK FOR A DIME!!!" (DeForest 15). The dime novel concept caught on with the reading public and, as Shelley Streeby relates, the *Beadle's Dime Novel* brand – visually consisting of the image of a dime on distinctive orange-paper covers – came to "signify a much larger body of popular literature"[65] (587). Competitors in the emerging dime novel market were quick to appear, such as former Beadle-employee George P. Munro, who began publishing *Munro's Ten Cent Novels* in 1863 (Cox, *Companion* xii-iv). Despite their catchall name, dime novels became surprisingly varied in price and size, with publishers issuing pamphlets ranging from a 32-page octavo measurement of 7 by 10 inches up to a 100-page booklet measuring 9 by 6 inches and prices fluctuating anywhere between five and twenty-five cents (LeBlanc 15). In the burgeoning dime novel market, publishers sometimes supplemented the original fiction in their catalog with reprints of story paper serials, which meant there was some cross-over between formats (LeBlanc 19). However, the dime novel "represented the first mass-produced entertainment industry of importance [in the United States], and it has been said that they stood in the same relation to the average young American as television does today" (Haining 46).

The success of the dime novel, in its various forms, went unrivaled for decades. It was not until 1896, with the introduction of Frank Munsey's *The Argosy*, that another cheap format –

[65] The success of the *Beadle Dime Novel* was due, in part, to the start of the Civil War, after which, "sales rose even higher" (DeForest 16). According to DeForest, the "cheap and easy-to-carry books proved popular among soldiers [….] [becoming] one of their major sources of entertainment. By the end of the war, [publishers] Beadle and Adams had sold nearly five million copies of their various novels" (ibid). The trademark orange-paper cover of early Beadle books, often known as "yellow backs," was altered in 1874 when "the name of the series changed to *Beadle's New Dime Novels*" and covers were "now hand colored; the color [being] applied individually with stencils" (LeBlanc 14-5).

distinct from the dime novel – became available for fans of popular fiction. Munsey's publication, recognized as the first pulp magazine, actually began in 1882 as a "weekly boys' adventure magazine in dime novel format" known as *The Golden Argosy*[66] (Ashley, *Golden*). In 1896, hoping to capitalize on the success of his "slick" publication, *Munsey's*, which achieved a peak publication of 700,000 following a significant price drop, Frank Munsey renamed his boys' magazine *The Argosy*, increased its size to 192-pages, and altered its content to "adult-adventure fiction;" each issue was filled with "135,000 words, unrelieved by illustrations, with 60 pages of ads (on coated stock), its thick yellow covers indicating the contents" [67] (Goodstone xii). By 1907, Munsey's new "pulp" publication achieved a readership of 500,000."[68] (ibid) As with *Munsey's*, pricing was a central instigator of *The Argosy*'s initial success. Arguing that "the story itself is more important than the paper it is printed on," Frank Munsey lowered production costs on *The Argosy* by printing the magazine on "rough wood pulp paper (hence the term 'pulp' to categorize such magazines)" (Umphlett 33). As a result, he was able to offer readers "over one hundred pages [of fiction] selling for ten cents a copy" (ibid).

In comparison, dime novels at the time were typically selling for only five cents, but were often "no more than 32 pages long" (Sampson 11). *The Argosy*'s "dramatically exciting cover

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[66] Frank Munsey is often referred to as "the father of the pulp magazine" (Umphlett 33). When he died in 1925, some obituaries denigrated his pulp legacy, stating: "Frank Munsey contributed to the journalism of his day the talent of a meat packer, the morals of a money changer and the manner of an undertaker" (qtd. in Goulart 2).

[67] The term "slick" became commonly applied to magazines printed on quality paper as opposed to dime novels and "pulps" that were produced using cheap wood-pulp. The reference also quickly came to signify content, where slick-paper magazines were thought to contain "elite" or "quality" items and pulp magazines were argued to contain a lower class of reading material. See, Earle, p. 65. Ashley notes that, in later years, some pulps altered their format to complete with the larger "slick" magazines, issuing pulps as large as 11 x 8 inches (*Golden*, n.p.).

[68] According to Panek, *The Golden Argosy* had a circulation of 9,000 in 1894; when, in 1907, the overhauled *Argosy* achieved the aforementioned circulation of 500,000, it was making a profit of $300,000 per year (*Probable Cause* 109).

illustrations" also drew readers away from the dime novel, simultaneously "establish[ing] both the image and format of countless pulp imitations to follow" (Umphlett 33). As Robert Sampson suggests, despite their similarities – both being printed on pulp paper, for instance – dime novels "were pamphlets, rather than magazines and, therefore, only the spiritual ancestor of the pulps" (11). For the reading public, pulps were something colorful and new, even if the earliest content was "not something rarely to be found elsewhere but rather more of the same in larger quantities"[69] (Goulart 10). As had been the case with dime novels nearly forty years before, competitors quickly arrived on the publishing scene as "publishers hurried to cash in on the Munsey rag-paper to pulp-riches formula" (Goodstone xii). Unlike dime novels, pulp magazines tended to maintain a more or less recognizable format across publishing firms. Munsey published his revamped version of *The Argosy* as a 7 by 10 inch magazine and that remained, almost universally, the format of successive pulps[70] (Goodstone ix; Ashley, *Golden* n.p.). While Munsey's *Argosy* relied on the same hodgepodge of escapist literature – "the adventure tale, the historical romance, the detective mystery, the Western, and the emerging forms of fantasy and science fiction" – familiar to readers of the story paper or dime novel, pulps quickly added audience-based content, such as readers' letters and quizzes, necessary as market research given the pulp market's developing "reliance on advertising revenue" (Umphlett 33; Whalan 99). In 1906, Munsey continued to innovate in the pulp field, issuing the first genre-specific pulp, *The Railroad Man's Magazine*, sparking another market-wide pulp publishing trend (Ashley, *Golden*

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[69] Goulart later claims it was not until the emergence of the hard-boiled pulp writers of the 1920s that the content of the pulps began to significantly differ from that of the dime novels; as he puts it, hardboiled detectives were "linked with reality, with the real crimes of the urban world and the real smell and feel of the mean streets, and this put the best of them in a different class from […] the earlier dime-novel sleuths with their upper-class values and methods" (23).
[70] Ashley notes that, in later years, some pulp publishers switched to a larger format, around 8 by 11 inches, to compete with slick magazines (*Golden*, n.p.).

n.p.). In 1915, as part of the final transition from dime novels to pulps, the publishing firm of Street & Smith converted their most successful and enduring dime novel detective series, *Nick Carter Stories*, into the first genre-specific detective pulp, *Detective Story* (Cox, *Companion* 79-80). Street & Smith's new detective pulp marked the first step toward the development of the distinctly American genre of hardboiled detective fiction that would emerge in the 1920s and 1930s.

Transatlantic Detective Heroes

Interest in detective fiction was not a long-established tradition in popular fiction; in fact, the genre had been in existence less than one hundred years when *Detective Story* hit American newsstands in 1915. Popular interest in crime literature, however, was well-established by the pulp era. As Charles Rzepka relates, "[c]rime stories in Europe predate[d] detective fiction by two or more centuries, appearing in England as early as the rogues' tales of the high Renaissance" (51). Most scholars, including Rzepka, cite the *Newgate Calendar* – a series of broadside ballads (and, eventually, novels) based on the supposedly true histories of condemned inmates awaiting execution at Newgate Prison in London, beginning in 1698 – as the germ of modern crime fiction (ibid). Numerous versions of these calendars were published throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, offering "news, sensation, morality, adventure, and even a bit of black humor" to readers; content, however, centered on the criminal and the moral lessons that might be gleaned from his or her life history, rather than the crime, itself, and related questions of detection and actual guilt (Panek, *Sherlock* 11-3). Until roughly 1825, with the inclusion of "innocents wrongly accused" tales, there was no perceived need in the criminal literature of the era for detecting the guilt or innocence of the accused, simply because there was

little-to-no expectation or perceived need for detecting guilt or innocence among the accused within society (ibid). As Karen Halttunen relates,

> [b]efore the mid-eighteenth century, the Anglo-American criminal trial was not adversarial. It worked as an inquisitorial procedure conducted by a judge whose job was to ferret out God's truth, considered to be single and uncontestable [….] The purposes served by the trial were to convince spectators of the defendant's guilt, educate townspeople in the evils of crime, and inflict a ritual humiliation on the criminal to induce confession and repentance (93-4).

This began to change, however, as law enforcement and criminal justice began to account for the potential innocence of the accused. By the 1840s, Victorian codes of morality and associated social reforms were beginning to migrate from England to the United States, including transformative approaches to the question of crime and detective policing.[71] Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, American law enforcement was based on the inherited English custom of the constable and watch, which could be traced back to the medieval practice of hue and cry[72] (Monkkonen 31-2). Throughout this time, the American population was primarily "self-policing," with communities relying on volunteer groups for the capture of criminals (Halttunen 109). In 1829, however, London moved to modernize its police force with the development of a unified Metropolitan Police. It was not until 1853, after a decade of debate, that New York became the first American city to follow the London model and professionalize its law enforcement under the stated principle that crime prevention "depended on creating among

[71] For more on Victorian reforms relating to crime and policing, see, Panek, *Sherlock*, 20-2.
[72] Monkkonen notes the existence of certain differences between British and American constables, most notably the lack of patrol responsibilities among those in the United States, the result, he argues, of the unique social climate in the United States, especially in regard to the Western frontier (33).

potential offenders moral fear and certainty of apprehension and punishment"[73] (Monkkonen 40-2).

Debates over the nascent police presence in major British and American cities coincided with the emergence of controversial revolutions in science and education that encouraged an awareness of "the power of material evidence," which threatened to overthrow the inherited medievalism of the status quo in policing and criminal justice. As LeRoy Lad Panek summarized, "[c[rime, detection, and punishment, then, became less directly the province of the priest and more that of the police and the courts" (*Origins* 27). Or, put another way, it was part of a broader social "transformation from the alliance of the aristocracy and religion to capitalism and science"[74] (Landrum xi). This emerging respect for rational analysis and material evidence made room for "a new kind of public hero" with newly-valued skills: "master interpreter, inventor of hypothetical arrays, [and] reconstructor of past events"[75] (Rzepka 68-71). Developing out of this shared sociocultural climate, the basic template for the modern detective story "evolved from the transatlantic literary exchanges that took place from the 1840s onward between the United States and Great Britain" (Panek, *Sherlock* 2).

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[73] Monkkonen suggests that "after the establishment of the first few American [police] departments, the paths of the police of the two countries [England and the United States] diverged, those in American cities looking at each other rather than to London" for their example (40).

[74] This transformation is often related to the rise of an affluent middle-class in late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century Britain and the United States. See, Cawelti, *Adventure*, pp. 102-5, and Rzepka, 21-2. Scholars have read the success of the detective character in this period as both a symbol of the triumph of middle-class values and an indicator of the instability of those values. See, for instance, Panek, *Sherlock*, p. 37, and Pernau, pp. 179-94.

[75] "The weight of evidence offered in trials slowly shifted from people to things, from the witness' word to the mute evidence science and scientists could adduce from the minutiae of the material world. Along side this evolution in the law, the concept of the nature of the criminal changed as the century progressed from Galt and phrenology to Freud and psychiatry. As dissimilar as were these views of human nature, both banished the concept of sin from the explanation of human behavior" (Panek, *Origins* 27).

The first of these transatlantic literary sallies is considered to be the tales of ratiocination penned by Edgar Allan Poe. With the creation of C. Auguste Dupin, who first appeared in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" in the April, 1841, issue of *Graham's Magazine*, Poe is credited with creating the detective fiction genre.[76] His Dupin stories (there were three in all) broke with the inherited traditions of the *Newgate Calendar* and similar crime-based fiction by transferring the focus of the story "almost exclusively on the detective rather than the criminal or the victim, [while] justice [i.e., morality] is never really a very serious consideration"[77] (Panek, *Sherlock* 52). The process of detecting – of solving the puzzle – is the point of the story and Poe's protagonist ushers in numerous staples of detective fiction that are easily recognized in the genre today; as Matthew Pearl states, "[t]hese narrative elements came together with Poe, and even now, more than 160 years after the Dupin tales first appeared, we can still sense him in the act of originating a new format and approach" (ix). Among these groundbreaking narrative elements are:

> the locked room that is not locked, the contest between investigators, the contest between the amateur and the professional, the contest between detective and mastermind, the newspaper advertisement, the so-called 'arm-chair' detective in which the detective solves the crime without leaving his rooms, the enigmatic clue, the red herring, [and] forensic evidence […] (Panek, *Sherlock* 53).

Arguably, however, the most important elements in the development of detective fiction that emerged from Poe's stories are his representations of Dupin and his unnamed narrator-friend. The character of Dupin, in particular, "exhibits the striking characteristics of intellectual brilliance and personal eccentricity which indelibly mark" many of the most well-known detectives in the genre; he becomes "the first of a long line of bohemian amateur or private

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[76] According to Rzepka, "'Murders in the Rue Morgue' helped make *Graham's Magazine*, where [the story] first appeared, the best-selling periodical in America" (90).

[77] For more on this, see, Panek, *Sherlock*, pp. 56-7, and, Panek, *Origins*, pp. 8-9.

detectives living at a remove from mainstream society" (Grella 89; Rzepka 74). Similarly, Poe's nameless narrator-sidekick acts "like a foil to Dupin in regard to his mental and analytic abilities," allowing readers to develop a "feeling of intimacy while keeping them at a distance from the immediate observations and conclusions of his detective hero" (Deinzer 7; Rzepka 77).

Poe's creation found a ready audience not only in the United States, but in Europe and Great Britain.[78] In fact, as John Cawelti relates, after Poe created the Dupin tales, "the impetus of the detective story passed for the rest of the nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth to England […]."[79] (*Mystery* 364) Although authors like Wilkie Collins (*The Moonstone*) and Charles Dickens (*Bleak House*) influenced the popular swing toward British detective mysteries, the primary impetus for this shift came from the unprecedented success of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's creation of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.[80] In 1887, with the publication of *A Study in Scarlet* in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, Conan Doyle "established the definitive detective character and codified Poe's formal inventions […]" (Cawelti, *Mystery* 332). In fact, the characters of Holmes and Watson are often compared to Dupin and his nameless narrator.[81] Conan Doyle, himself, in *A Study in Scarlet* offers a tongue-in-cheek discussion between Watson and Holmes of the inevitable comparison:

> [Watson:] 'You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin. I had no

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[78] See, Panek, *Sherlock*, p. 57.

[79] The critical reception of British detective fiction so far outdistanced the reception of American versions that Julian Symons could write, in 1962, that it was "a freakish chance that made the generator [Edgar Allan Poe] of this conspicuously British literary form an American, but Poe was a rarity, a writer of original genius […]" (*The Detective Story* 10).

[80] For more on the influence of Collins and Dickens on the development of detective fiction, see, Panek, *Sherlock*, pp. 89-143.

[81] See, for instance, Cawelti, *Adventure,* p. 93. A few scholars have argued against comparing Dupin and Holmes. Colin Watson, for one, dismisses such associations, claiming, in his work *Snobbery with Violence*, that most of the Dupin-Holmes comparisons are offered by Americans; he argues that "[a]part from the question of national kudos, the relationship [of Holmes to Dupin] is not of much importance" (180).

> idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories.' Sherlock Holmes rose and lit his pipe. 'No doubt you think that you are complimenting me in comparing me to Dupin,' he observed. 'Now, in my opinion, Dupin was a very inferior fellow. That trick of his of breaking in on his friends' thoughts with an apropos remark after a quarter of an hour's silence is really very showy and superficial. He had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine' (18-9).

Despite Holmes' disavowal of bearing any resemblance to Dupin, Conan Doyle readily gave credit for the success of his stories to the many "traits and techniques" he borrowed from Poe's detective tales (Panek, *Origins* 29).

Certainly, taken together, the stories of Dupin and Holmes created and popularized the tenets of what would become recognized as the classic detective story, which dominated Anglo-American detective fiction from the 1840s until well into the mid-twentieth century.[82] Much has been written on the classic detective genre since John Cawelti's groundbreaking work on formula literature in the 1970s; basically, the classic detective story presents a well-mannered and intellectual mystery with an "emphasis on deduction and the detective's role as protector of the social order" that "creat[es] the illusion of rational control over the mysteries of life […]" (*Adventure* 136-7). Often, the pattern of these stories involves an alienated, eccentric aristocratic figure who engages with society in order to solve an "unexplained event that has traumatized the community" (Van Dover, *Making* 40, 47). According to Robert Paul, in his work *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes*, this "classic pattern won its predominance at least in part because it caught up and endorsed many of the things that the dominant culture wanted to believe about itself"[83] (59). Paul goes on to suggest that, "[i]n the figure of the great detective who defended society and upheld its moral code, society discovered a myth of what it most truly worshipped"

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[82] See, Van Dover, *Certainty*, pp. 25-30, and, Cawelti, *Adventure,* pp. 80-105.
[83] Julian Symons refers to classic detective stories as "the fairy tales of Western industrial civilization" (*The Detective Story* 9).

(ibid). At the turn of the twentieth century, Anglo-American society appeared to accept Sherlock Holmes as a mythical hero that it refused to let go; when Conan Doyle attempted to finish with Holmes by killing him off in the 1893 story "The Final Solution," the public reacted as if a real-life hero had been taken away. Across America, "Let's Keep Holmes Alive" clubs were formed and, in Britain, everyone from bank clerks to shopkeepers wore mourning armbands in deference to the death of Holmes[84] (Symons, *Bloody Murder* 88; Freeman xxxii). Today, the desire to acknowledge the myth of the Holmes character remains strong, with letters continuing to arrive at Holmes's fictional address on Baker Street and biographies being penned as if Sherlock were real; in October, 2002, the Royal Society of Chemistry even awarded Holmes an Honorary Fellowship[85] (Freeman xix-xx).

The desire among contemporary readers on both sides of the Atlantic to mythologize Conan Doyle's creation to the point that Holmes seemed almost real demonstrates what is, in the midst of their similarities, perhaps the most notable distinction between Holmes and Dupin; while Dupin was almost "a disembodied intellect," Holmes was "the first truly complex, fully rounded, psychologically interesting detective hero"[86] (Thompson 61). Related to this critique,

[84] Conan Doyle succumbed to public pressure and, in 1902, resumed publishing Holmes stories with *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

[85] The willingness of contemporary readers – regardless of social class or nationality – to relate to Holmes as a real person was widespread. Howard Haycraft relates an intriguing story in his 1941 work, *Murder for Pleasure*, regarding a French general in the First World War who, upon meeting Conan Doyle, demanded to know what rank Holmes held in the English army. According to Haycraft, Conan Doyle "could only stammer in halting French that the detective was 'too old' for active service" (58).

[86] As Dorothy Sayers suggested, Holmes is "a more human and endearing figure than Dupin, and he has earned as his reward the supreme honor which literature can bestow – the secular equivalent of canonisation" (qtd. in Gruesser 12). Matthew Pearl offers this comparison: "Readers today still send letters to Sherlock Holmes […] as if the character were a real person; feeling a personal acquaintance with Poe's detective, however, is harder, and I imagine not many postcards are sent to Dupin's address in the Faubourg St. Germain. The sparse details on Dupin's

several scholars have also argued for the existence of a similar divide between the settings occupied by Dupin and Holmes. Poe's stories featuring Dupin were set in Paris, France, and his imagined descriptions of the city were "just real enough," with some locations openly modeled on New York City venues familiar to Poe[87] (Van Dover, *Certainty* 68). Alternately, "Holmes's gaslit London is real" (ibid). As Colin Watson suggests, it is as if "Doyle was the sole patentee not only of Sherlock Holmes but of gaslight, the hansom cab, telegraphy, Scotland Yard, perhaps even Victorian London itself, fogs and all"[88] (24). Of course, much of Holmes's London did not exist – including the famous residence at 221B Baker Street.[89] Yet, Holmes's comfortable world "in which urban squalor makes a quaint contrast to the elegance of London hansom cabs and gas street lamps" affirmed the values of an increasingly vulnerable British imperialism, while simultaneously (re)generating those same values through popularization[90] (Thompson 76-7). As Jon Thompson illustrates, the Sherlock Holmes myth is "a myth of England as well."[91] (ibid)

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background and his interior life that can be found in the stories are barely sufficient to write the briefest encyclopedia entry on him" (x).

[87] According to Van Dover, when the Dupin stories were translated into French, there were "objections raised against Poe's faux Paris […]" (*Certainty* 68).

[88] Watson goes on to describe Conan Doyle's fictional vision of London as "a city whose every crime is soluble and whose vices are sealed within narrow and defined areas. It is a cosy place. It is, for as long as a hawk-eyed man broods in Baker Street, a safe place." (24) Conan Doyle's fictional world, like his detective, became the perfect template of the classic detective story.

[89] "Indeed, the London of Sherlock Holmes is almost as famous as Holmes himself. Nevertheless, it is only a representation, a fictional construct of late-nineteenth century London […] remarkable as much for what it excludes or domesticates – class conflict, racism, imperialism, even women – as for what it includes" (Thompson 61-2).

[90] Concern over the vulnerability of the British Empire was growing after military embarrassments in the Boer Wars, but was also due to increasing pressures from quickly militarizing countries like Germany. Interestingly, Conan Doyle served for one year in a field hospital during the Second Boer War, which began in 1899, and wrote a history of the conflict – titled *The Great Boer War* – on his return to England. See, Pascal, *Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Baker Street*, pp. 93-103. For more on Conan Doyle and British imperialism, see, Rzepka, p. 120, and, Bratlinger, p. 228.

[91] For more on the idea of Sherlock Holmes as an archetype for Victorian England, see, Ruehlmann, pp. 4-5.

These myths of a Sherlockian England appealed strongly to contemporary readers in the United States, where "what would become known to some as the 'sacred writings' gained greater popularity, and perhaps even wider influence" than in the country of their origin (Panek, *Origins* 29). In the United States, Conan Doyle's stories were published in upmarket magazines, such as *McClure's*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Collier's Weekly*[92] (Panek, *Origins* 31). The caché of these publication sites, coupled with the equally powerful caché of the English gentleman stereotype among middle- and upper-class Americans, assured that Holmes's imitators in the United States often tried to mirror the gentleman detective figure of the "more refined old world," providing a historical legitimacy and sophistication thought to be unattainable to many Americans of the era[93] (Steenberg 29). There were those, such as Mark Twain, who complained of the American tendency to "praise everything English and do it affectionately" (Thomas, *Detective Fiction* 245). However, for most mainstream middle- and upper-class Americans in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, it was unquestionably Conan Doyle's characterization of Holmes and the London he inhabited – more than Poe's Dupin – that "persisted as *the* model for the American detective hero," ushering in what many scholars acknowledge as "the flowering of the British detective story" (Umphlett 101; Pyrhönen 15).

[92] "Sherlock Holmes, like the majority of [fictional] detectives who emerged around the turn of the twentieth century attempting to rival his phenomenal popularity, appeared first in a magazine format far removed from that of the dime novel. These new style magazines were more compact, better printed on quality paper, and profusely illustrated with colour artwork" (Haining, p. 66). Newspaper reprints of Conan Doyle's stories also played an important role in introducing the American audience to Sherlock Holmes; see, Panek, *Origins*, pp. 30-1.

[93] As Panek argues, detective fiction became a more respectable genre as it moved into "the legitimate world of middle-class readership" through magazines like *McClure's*; this legitimization was possible, in part, due to the mainstream American "notion that if the English can do it, it must be okay" (*Probable Cause* 90). For more on how Holmes legitimized detective fiction in the United States, see, Panek, *Origins*, pp. 211-2. See, Breu, p. 59, for a brief discussion of the gentleman detective figure.

The power and popularity of the Holmes model led many American authors to style their stateside detectives after the enigmatic English sleuth, in one way or another. Among the American adherents to the Holmes's mystique were writers like Jacques Futrelle, creator of Professor Augustus Van Dusen of Boston College who commands such "powers of logic and intellect" that he becomes known simply as "The Thinking Machine," and Arthur Benjamin Reeve, creator of another professor-detective – this time of Columbia University – in the character of Craig Kennedy, who uses his knowledge of chemistry to solve crimes[94] (Haining 73-4, 81-2). While the stories of Futrelle and Reeve – both professional writers – were immensely popular in their day, the characters of Van Dusen and Kennedy were less full-bodied than Holmes; instead, they "intensified" specific aspects of the Holmes character by focusing, in the case of Van Dusen, on extreme rationality or, in the case of Kennedy, on extreme scientific and technological skill[95] (Knight 68-9). Neither character significantly challenged the dominance of Sherlock Holmes in the public imagination. Instead, both Kennedy and Van Dusen followed the Holmesian model of detecting, presenting themselves, first and foremost, as intellectual super-sleuths (Van Dover, *Making* 49-50).

Vernacular Detectives Heroes

There was, however, another style of detective hero taking shape in American popular literature. Unlike the more legitimate magazines that sought to replicate the success of the Great Detective archetype, the more ephemeral dime novels and emerging pulp magazines were busy publishing a style of detective hero who owed less to deduction and logic and more to quick

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[94] Futrelle was among those lost in the *Titanic* sinking of April, 1912; during World War I, Reeve was selected to "set up a special crime and spy detection laboratory in Washington DC" (Haining 82, 74).
[95] Unlike Futrelle and Reeve, who were both professional detective story writers, most dime novel authors held other, more permanent jobs. See, Cox, *Companion*, pp. xvii-iii.

action, pluck, and good fortune. This differentiation may, in part, be due to the influence of the Western frontiersman in dime novel adventure stories. Unlike elite magazines, such as *Collier's* or *McClure's*, dime novels were made to supply straight-ahead adventure stories, emphasizing "action and danger in settings colored by romanticism and sensationalism"[96] (Miller, "From Old Cap" 199). The earliest dime novels focused on pseudo-historical topics from the American past – particularly stories of heroism on the battlefield or the frontier. The very first *Beadle's Dime Novel*, a reprint of Ann Stephens's *Malaeska, the Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, was set on the American frontier and was extremely successful – ten thousand copies were sold in its first few weeks of publication[97] (Brown, *Injun* 93). This success was followed and cemented by Beadle's follow-up publication, *Seth Jones*, which utilized a nation-wide promotion of "posters, dodgers and painted inscriptions demanding to know, 'Who is Seth Jones?'" (Haining 47). Upon publication, new posters appeared announcing the identity of Jones, including a "lithographic portrait of a stalwart, heroic looking hunter," that led a curious public to purchase 600,000 copies of the story (ibid). The popularity of early dime novel titles like *Malaeska* and *Seth Jones* was so overwhelming that it established the dominance of western and frontier stories in the first years of dime novel publishing, leading many readers to consider the dime novel genre "by definition a western" (Cox, "Dime Novels" 63-4; Cox, *Companion* xv).

These western and frontier stories created a mythical hero who promoted the American Dream and the doctrine of Manifest Destiny by celebrating the perceived "self-reliance, natural nobility, and individuality of a modern American whose daring actions confirmed the inevitable

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[96] Miller qualifies the distinction between fiction found in upmarket magazines and dime novels, iterating that the plots published in dime novels were not always exceptionally divergent from those of elite magazines, but were "thrown into bolder relief and stripped of all dilemmas of the soul" ("From Old Cap" 199).

[97] As an interesting aside, Stephens' *Malaeska* may also be notable for being the first incident in print of someone having "bit the dust." See, Cox, *Companion*, p. 250.

march of his nation" (Gray 503). These were "men of action, adept at the skills of violence and the arts of survival" who always stood "for good over evil, for right over wrong, for law not disorder, and, finally, for civilization over anarchy" (Van Dover, *Certainty* 170n5; Harvey 63). The power of this myth, as well as its many contradictions and exclusions, has been well-documented elsewhere; it is important to remember, however, that these dime novel westerns greatly "influenced and often defined the image of the West to the growing popular market" and created the myth of an American hero capable of challenging the dominance of England's Sherlock Holmes[98] (Lewis, *Unsettling* 118). As Bill Brown put it, this image offered "an alternative to the rational dictates of modernity, while the fund of jargon, gesture, and attitude distinguishes the pragmatic American from the refined European […]" (qtd. in Lewis, *Unsettling* 118).

By the late-1870s, the popular image of a frontier-based American hero who countermands the rational, refined model of the European [i.e., English] hero transferred, almost whole, to the detective genre as dime novels shifted away from rural tales of an untamed West to tales of hardship and crime in an urban environment, mirroring the population shifts occurring throughout the United States at the time (Miller, "From Old Cap" 200). As Charles Harvey stated in his *Atlantic Monthly* article, "The Dime Novel in American Life," in 1907:

> [b]etween the railroads which transported the cattle from the ranges to the stockyards, and the barbed wire fences of the settlers who are abolishing the ranges, the cowboy as a picturesque feature of the Western landscape has passed out, and the dime novel will know him no more. This leaves the detective in possession of the stage (44).

At first, dime novel authors simply transplanted the Western hero from the frontier to the city; as Cox relates, "the early detectives are often no different from the heroes of the frontier

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[98] On the problematic nature of dime novel westerns, see, for instance, Wallman, pp. 57-92.

and western dime novels who may be referred to as detectives when they apply the skill of the woodsman and tracker to finding a culprit"[99] ("Dime Novels" 71). There was, however, a real-life detective whose published exploits also began to color the character of the American dime novel detective. Allan Pinkerton, who made a name for himself as founder of Pinkerton's Detective Agency (which had a hand in foiling an assassination attempt made on President Lincoln, among other national-profile cases) published novels, such as *The Expressman and the Detective* (1874), that caught the imagination of the country[100] (Panek, *Origins* 133-4). Before long, published accounts of the Pinkerton Detective Agency became the pattern followed by dime novel detective fiction in the United States[101] (Cox, *Companion* 78).

With the rising popularity of dime novel detectives, publishers rushed to meet market demands, packing newsstands with innumerable new detective characters.[102] Among the more memorable were Harlan Page Halsey's Old Sleuth (inspired, in part, by Allan Pinkerton), who premiered in the story "Old Sleuth, the Detective; or, The Bay Ridge Mystery" in George Munro's *Fireside Companion* in 1872, and Street & Smith's Nick Carter character, who first appeared in the *New York Weekly* story "The Old Detective's Pupil" in 1886 and was expanded into *The Nick Carter Library*, a series exclusively dedicated to Carter stories, in 1891 (Goulart 7;

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[99] Although not appearing until 1911, Melville Davisson Post's Uncle Abner character demonstrates the continuing popularity of linking the frontier character and the detective in the dime novel era. As Van Dover relates, Uncle Abner is "the detective as anti-intellectual. A backwoodsman in early 19th-century Virginia, Abner is brilliant at reading clues and characters, but he acknowledges only one source for ideas: the Bible which he always carries with him" (*Making* 49).

[100] According to Ronald Thomas, Mark Twain's satire *Simon Wheeler* was "aimed expressly at Allan Pinkerton's popular accounts of the private detective business" (*Detective Fiction* 244).

[101] It is interesting to note the Scottish backgrounds of both Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Allan Pinkerton, considering the impact both men had on detective fiction in the United States. Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, while Pinkerton was born in Glasgow, later immigrating to Chicago. For critical arguments regarding how Pinkerton's career and writings may have influence Arthur Conan Doyle, see, Bedore, pp. 79-80.

[102] See, Knight, p. 54.

LeBlanc 17). Unlike the earliest dime novels heroes, Old Sleuth and Nick Carter were recurring characters who became mainstays in the dime novel detective field, generating large fan-bases.[103] Nick Carter was, by far, the most successful of the serialized dime novel detectives, maintaining a following for almost thirty years through his seemingly endless supply of daring disguises – a trademark of the Street & Smith character – and youthful daring.[104] According to Cox, Carter was "perhaps the best-known and most popular dime novel detective" of the era who "set a new pattern by being a young, obviously American, hero" (*Companion* 50). His Americanism was recalled in glowing terms by Silas Bent, writing in 1925 for the *New York Times*:

> Nick Carter was one of the most virtuous men that ever set down his exploits. He didn't drink. He never swore. He was a red-blooded, upstanding American, to whom wrongdoing in every form was abhorrent. Virtue in his person invariably triumphed, and the criminals he pursued were trapped at last to meet a just punishment. Here, if ever, were the old moralities justified (BR2).

For dime novel readers, Nick Carter became a "mythical figure representing the flawless mastery of good triumphing over evil" in an American manner that was more clean-cut and less cerebral than the super-sleuth figure of Britain's Sherlock Holmes (Cox, qtd, in Goulart 8-9). Unlike the puzzle mysteries of the classic detective genre, dime novel detective stories placed morality and justice at the center of the plot, while featuring sleuths who were more athletes than aesthetes – thus moving away from the aristocratic provenance of the great detective archetype (Ruehlmann 48-9, 51).

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[103] The Beadle publishing firm was also responsible for innovating the concept of the recurring character in dime novels; the first of these was outlaw character Deadwood Dick, who premiered in 1877 in Beadle's "Half Dime Library" (Ramsey and Derounian-Stodola 265-6). For more on the large fan-base of Old Sleuth, see Haining, p. 50; for Nick Carter, see, Haining, pp. 57-9.
[104] Since the dime novel era, the Nick Carter character has appeared in film, radio, television and paperback, his temperament changing from the "clean-living young detective in the 1880s to a sophisticated secret agent in the 1960s" (Mayer, *Crime Films* 67). See, also, Neuburg, p. 140.

Related to this movement toward a less aristocratic detective hero, many dime novel detectives – following the popularity of the Pinkerton stories – relinquished the role of the amateur in favor of professionalism, becoming the "detective as working man" (Ruehlmann 32). William Ruehlmann cites Nick Carter as a "primitive early version of the working private cop," but scholars have noted the American trend toward professionalism in a variety of characters[105] (49). Even when the American detective was still an amateur sleuth, as in the case of Futrelle's aforementioned Professor Van Dusen, the trend toward professionalism was still in evidence, this time in relation to Van Dusen's status as a scientist and university professor, which Van Dover argues provided both social credibility and respectability (*Method* 123). Questions of respectability dogged American detective fiction in the dime novel era, with many considering detectives "very dubious heroes" (Miller, "From Old Cap" 201). As Wilbur Miller suggests, "some critics believed that the detective's character would inevitably be tarnished" due to the profession's necessary association with the underbelly of urban society; detective characters were seen as liminal figures who potentially exercised a negative moral influence on readers (201-2).

This liminality was tangibly expressed, for many, in the dime novel convention of the detective as a master of disguise. Disguised heroes had been a dime novel trait since the earliest days of frontier-story dominance – the previously mentioned Beadle publication of *Seth Jones*, for instance, made use of disguise as an integral plot technique (Panek, *Probable Cause* 25). However, it was the character of Old Sleuth who made disguise a central technique of the dime novel detective; as Michael Denning argues, "the early [dime novel] detective heroes were

[105] For more on the professionalization of American detective characters in the late-nineteenth century, see Panek, *Sherlock*, p. 186.

anonymous sleuths who could assume any disguise, any accent”[106] (204). The detective, in American popular fiction, was gradually becoming a “common” man who could discover “the underside of all class experiences, from the highest to the lowest” (Denning 139; Miller, “From Old Cap” 202). Slang words and violence became central to the recurring dime novel worlds of characters like Old Sleuth, emphasizing the bewildering and threatening nature of modern urban life (Hamilton 65-6). In many instances, dime novels purposefully played upon growing fears of the alienating urban scene; the potential threats of the city were part of what made dime novels exciting to readers. Take, for instance, the first advertisement run by *The Fireside Companion* for *Old Sleuth* in May, 1872:

> It is a story of New York city life, and has largely to do with *fast* young men, and gives an insight into the life led in a city, which will startle a good many people. Mr. Pastor has been in a position to know more than most authors; and the story will be a record of facts more startling than fiction (Panek, *Probable Cause* 26).

The Mr. Pastor referred to in the advertisement is actually Tony Pastor – a “well-known song-and-dance man and one of the creators of what would become vaudeville” (Panek, *Sherlock* 166). By claiming Old Sleuth was written by a stage performer who has been “in a position to know more” than the average author about the dark side of city life, the publisher provided another layer of potential scintillation to readers; actors were liminal figures in polite society, just as detectives were, and retained a reputation as “drunkards and irresponsible profligates” into the early twentieth century (McArthur 124). While Tony Pastor’s popular success raised him

[106] Allan Pinkerton may, again, have been the model for Old Sleuth’s reliance on disguises; according to one Pinkerton biographer, Pinkerton trained his operatives in the art “of disguise, and of playing a role. His office often resembled the backstage of a theater with Pinkerton demonstrating to an operative ready for assignment how to act like a ‘greenhorn’ just off the boat, a bartender, a horsecar conductor, or gambler. He kept a large closet in his private office filled with various disguises” (qtd. in Nolan, *Hammett* 8).

above these theatrical profligates in the eyes of society, his unlimited access to the world of theater promised readers an insider's glimpse into some of the most shocking strands of urban life. Apparently, however, Old Sleuth did not need Tony Pastor to succeed; initially, many readers assumed Old Sleuth was a living detective, like Pinkerton, and before long George Munro began publishing the stories as if they were written by Sleuth, himself (Goodstone ix).

Damaging Dime Novels

Even without the provocative association with vaudeville, however, Old Sleuth garnered excessive interest from moral crusaders. Here, for instance, is what *The Literary News* reported after a new *Fireside Companion* featuring Old Sleuth was delivered to the city streets of St. Louis, Missouri, in February, 1884:

> A glance at the opening chapters of this story indicates that it is a sample of sensational literature run mad, and it is noticed here only as a specimen of a very vicious form of current fiction. […] Such publications appeal to a depraved taste, and gratify the most brutal longings. The bulk of their patronage comes from the uncultured and illiterate classes, as the newsdealers well know. They diffuse a malign and pestilent influence, and represent a base prostitution of literary art. The sensational literature of America has attained a dangerous growth, and, in its worst forms, is productive of immeasurable mischief (qtd. in Panek, *Sherlock* 164-5).

This is certainly a far cry from the reviews being received by Sherlock Holmes in upscale publications like *McClure's*. As Old Sleuth and his imitators gained a loyal readership, organizations like the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice took shape and a national debate regarding the moral impact of dime novels on youth was unleashed. At the helm of what would become a full-fledged moral crusade was Anthony Comstock, founder of the aforementioned anti-vice society and special agent of the Post Office Department (Pfitzer 230). For Comstock, dime novels were "sapping the moral fiber of America's young people" and had to be controlled (or banned) as far as possible (Rydell 35). The dime novel debate was

heightened in 1874, with the murder trial of accused fourteen-year-old serial killer Jesse Pomeroy. The prosecution in the case, which took place in Boston, argued that Pomeroy was incited to murder by his "insatiable appetite for dime novels" – an argument Pomeroy, himself, eventually promoted (Shrock 173; Goodman 54).

With items like the Pomeroy case in newspaper headlines, Comstock garnered zealous support for his reform efforts from organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.), which introduced a Department to Suppress Impure Literature that encouraged women to "lay their hands" on dime novels and "destroy them" (Fuller 134-8). At the same time, librarians and educators – whether university presidents or state superintendents of schools – spoke out against dime novels, arguing that "there was no more dangerous element in society" because such literature gave "the young incorrect and perverted ideas of life and its duties" (Fuller 155). With so many well-placed and outspoken critics, dime novel publishers like George Munro faced ever-increasing public scrutiny and political intimidation. Sometimes, too, the threat to publishers was more tangible; in the same year that Munro's *Fireside Companion* introduced the Old Sleuth character, their offices were raided by Comstock and a group of New York City Police and Munro was arrested for "publishing indecent material"[107] (Panek, *Sherlock* 166). Ironically, although early publicity for Old Sleuth insisted that Tony Pastor authored the stories, they were actually written by Harlan Page Halsey, who was formerly the director of the Brooklyn Board of Education (Panek, *Sherlock* 166). Given the vitriolic campaigns against dime novel characters issued by the likes of Comstock or the W.C.T.U., authors like Halsey took pains to ensure their heroes were morally circumspect. The detective hero in dime novels never drinks,

[107] Comstock did not only go after dime novel publishers; he also "carried out a number of citizen's arrests on newsdealers selling dime novels and had the courts order their stock destroyed" (Haining 56).

smokes, swears, or engages in sexual adventures; rather, decency is "essential" (Miller, "From Old Cap" 207). According to Frederick Marmaduke Van Rensselaer Dey, who took over writing the Nick Carter stories from series creator John Coryell, he "never wrote a Nick Carter story that he wouldn't read to a Bible Class" (Ruehlmann 49). In some cases, authors were even directly prohibited by publishers from submitting anything that might "carry an immoral taint" (Volo 386). According to the Reverend S.C. Spalding, who took over writing the Nick Carter stories in 1911, publisher Street & Smith was "so desirous of avoiding even the appearance of evil [in the moral depiction of their hero] that they went to the other extreme"[108] ("The Man Who Left" 6).

This movement away from any kind of vice has led some scholars to describe Nick Carter as "the blandest hero ever created" (Cox, qtd. in Goodstone x). Yet, it also highlights the superhuman moral and physical qualities expected of dime novel detectives in the late-nineteenth century. Unlike the British model of the classic detective who displays superhuman cerebral and theoretical skills and masks questionable activities (such as Holmes's habit of taking cocaine) under the guise of eccentricity, the American dime novel detective is morally straightforward and abstemious and, in part because of this self-discipline, physically unbeatable: he can "shoot straighter, fight better and last longer under torture than any other character in his story" (Hopppenstand, *Dime Novel* 4). Perhaps not surprisingly, depictions of superhuman moral and physical strength in characters like Nick Carter inspired a level of hero-worship that contributed to "forming masculine ideals for American boys"[109] (Bullough 181). These ideals emphasized a red-blooded Americanism, what Michael Denning described as "a young,

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[108] Spalding went on to describe Nick Carter in a way that emphasized his youth and action: "He's an athlete, you see, always in the pink of condition, physically and mentally: not a stoop-shouldered, artificially stimulated mechanism of thought" ("The Man Who Left" 6).

[109] Several historians, including Guy Reel, suggest that America at the turn of the twentieth century was "a nation in need of heroes, since the changes of modernization, industrialization, and immigration had challenged people's perceptions of the proper conduct of their lives" (18).

muscular, white Anglo Saxon[ism] (205). However, the superhuman attainment of this red-blooded Americanism actually fed some middle-class critiques in the ongoing debate over the effects of dime novels on readers. One of the most common complaints raised over dime novel characters and plots was their sensational unreality; critics argued the heroes of these stories were too self-reliant and that their "phenomenal success" would make readers "unfit for dealing with life's hard realities" (Nackenoff 254; Shrock 173-4). While scholars generally note the "air of unreality, of melodramatic hokum" in dime novel detective stories, hindsight reveals how tremendously popular the Carter style of melodramatic escapism was just before and after the turn of the twentieth century (Goulart 8). A variety of publications across genres demonstrate the same extraordinary plotlines and clean-cut, plucky characters who always manage to triumph over adversity. One such character, who rivaled Nick Carter in popularity among boys, was Frank Merriwell, who presented a "larger than life model of physical courage, self-discipline, and team play" on the sporting field, while maintaining an "incredibly honest and upright" lifestyle off the field (Umphlett 35). Although occupying the contested pages of dime novels, these were stories touting fair play and the kind of strenuous masculinity leaders like Theodore Roosevelt espoused so vehemently as the "essential characteristics" necessary for all Americans (Strychacz 278; Shrock 27).

Then there are the rags-to-riches stories of Horatio Alger, Jr., which "influenced a generation of young readers who grew to adulthood early in [the twentieth] century"[110] (Scharnhorst, *Alger* 144-5). Most often, the influence of his stories is related to the rise of capitalism, with Alger viewed as an apologist and "American success mythmaker" (Nackenoff 6; Schornhorst, *Alger* 146). Recent scholarship has sought a more complex reading of Alger's

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[110] It is interesting to note that the premier issue of Munsey's refashioned *Argosy* included the first part of a serialized Alger story. See, Umphlett, p. 33.

fiction, yet the predominant critical response to his stories remains similar to what Rychard Fink wrote in his introduction to a 1960s reprint of Alger novels: "There is no doubt that what he wrote was bilge, but it was inspired. His novels, it can be argued, wove a far firmer strand in the American character than the work of men with sounder intellectual credentials"[111] (6). Like all dime novel heroes of the era, Alger's protagonists "deplored smoking and drinking, and insisted on truthfulness, cleanliness, and honesty"[112] (Fink 30). Yet, also like other dime novel heroes of the era, the heroes of his stories were deemed questionable by moral crusaders and, by 1879, were banned from several libraries across the country[113] (Scharnhorst, *Lost Life*, 118-9).

Despite the ban, Alger's stories sold an estimated 250 million copies during his working career, arguably by repeating one successful formula: "poor boy plus perseverance equals fame and fortune" (Goodstone xi). The popularity of dime novels, on the whole, skyrocketed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Although scholars rightly point out boys between the ages of eight and sixteen were the primary intended audience for most dime novels, there is certainly evidence that girls, as well as adults of both sexes, also read these inexpensive novels[114] (Cox, *Companion* xxi). Recent scholarship has also suggested the importance of the working class in

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[111] For recent scholarship on Alger, see any of the biographies by Scharnhorst, as well as Carol Nackenoff's *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*.

[112] Panek goes so far as to argue that Alger influenced dime novels by popularizing, in his 1867 novel *Ragged Dick*, a detective story that is "straight forward, adolescent, and moral" (*Sherlock* 150).

[113] In responding to charges of vulgar sensationalism in his work, Alger attempted to differentiate his tales by describing dime novel stories as "tales of gore, rapine, and crime gilded with heroism" (Scharnhorst, *Lost Life* 119).

[114] Women certainly continued to write dime novels well after the early success of Ann Stephen's *Malaeska*. Even Louisa May Alcott was discovered to have published dime novels under a pseudonym. See, Rostenberg, "The Discovery of Louisa May Alcott's Pseudonym," and Stern, "Dime Novels by 'The Children's Friend,'" in *Pioneers, Passionate Ladies, and Private Eyes*, pp. 193-6, 197-213.

the rise of dime novel popularity[115] (Shrock 169). In 1879, an article by W.H. Bishop in the *Atlantic Monthly* certainly stigmatized the readership of dime novels by social class as much as gender or age; he stated that dime novels were "written almost exclusively for the use of the lower classes of society" and, although he recognized that boys comprised their "most ardent class of patron," he observed middle-aged women, shop girls and servants lining up to buy the latest editions from newspaper vendors (qtd. in Erickson 100).

Other, more obviously unsavory publications dealing with issues of urban crime were unquestionably linked to the male working class and immigrant populations, which may have heightened the moral condemnation of dime novel detectives by association; the most infamous of these was *The National Police Gazette*[116] (Shrock 174-5). Begun in 1845, ostensibly as "an organ to help police capture criminals," the *Gazette* was bought and repurposed by Irish immigrant Richard Kyle Fox in 1887 as a "journal of sport, sensation, stage, and romance"[117] (Reel 4). The *Gazette* and similar tabloids helped create an awareness of the "urban underworld" in American cities, feeding on middle- and upper-class fears of the era, particularly relating to issues like rapid industrialization and immigration and their perceived threat to the character of the nation (Gilfoyle 133-4; Salazar 1-9). Mirroring the sensationalism of yellow journalism, these publications entertained readers with titillating stories of criminality that blurred the line

[115] See, for instance, Michael Denning, *Mechanical Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*, and (for later pulp magazines) Erin A. Smith, *Hard-Boiled: Working Class Readers and Pulp Magazines*.

[116] Scholars, such as Kathleen Chamberlain, have argued that *The National Police Gazette* and similar publications influenced the rise in popularity of dime novel detectives after 1870, which suggests connections between the readership of dime novels and crime papers, as well as some level of content crossover. See, Chamberlain, "Capitalism, Counterfeiting, and Literary Representation: The Case of Lizzie Borden" in *Pioneers, Passionate Ladies, and Private Eyes*, p. 179.

[117] As previously noted in relation to *Old Sleuth* and Tony Pastor, there is a perceived connection between the stage and urban vice.

between hero and villain – creating national celebrities out of deviants and crooks (Reel 45; Gilfoyle 133). The sensational nature of the *Gazette*, even before Fox rebranded the tabloid, is summed up nicely by the following description taken from the November 8, 1845, issue:

> We offer this week a most interesting record of horrid murders, outrageous robberies, bold forgeries, astounding burglaries, hideous rapes, vulgar seductions, and recent exploits of pickpockets and hotel thieves in various parts of the country (Reel 17).

Beyond the question of national character, publications like the *Gazette* and the increasingly popular dime novel detective contributed to elitist anxieties regarding the status of American literature. In 1892, visiting Englishman Edward Delille penned a fifteen-page description of the state of "The American Newspaper Press;" after noting the seemingly unquenchable thirst for popular titles like *The National Police Gazette*, which he cites as being "trivial, vulgar, ignorant, braggart, and void of everything which constitutes true sense or thought," Delille concludes that "the States are not as yet a literary nation" (26). Dime novels, especially, were recognized by promoters and detractors alike as a "peculiarly American institution" that, as a lowbrow form of entertainment, undermined efforts to improve the literary standing of the nation in the eyes of Britain and the world (Reynolds 72). Although a number of legitimate (i.e., respectable) authors wrote for dime novels – Louisa May Alcott is a prime example – most did so under a pseudonym and sought to publicly distance themselves from such dangerous and distasteful literature (Murphy 189). In Alcott's case, her authorship of dime novel literature was not only hidden by a pseudonym, she also actively censured dime novels in many of her mainstream works, such as *Little Women*; as Emily Hamilton-Honey suggests, "Alcott

wrote her ‘sensation’ stories under a pseudonym for a reason” (93-5). Dime novels compromised not only the character of the nation, but the reputation of its literary output.[118]

A few voices did speak out in favor of dime novels, but these were mostly men and women involved in the industry.[119] One of the more striking statements in favor of dime novels came from one Frederick Whittaker, writing in 1884 in response to a negative editorial in the *New York Tribune*. In his response, Whittaker suggested that the very future of American literature depended on the dime novel industry, loosely presaging Dvorak’s 1893 statement that the future of American music lay in its vernacular, marginal spaces: “It is only the cheap stories, which you call dime novels, for which the demand is, and always will be inexhaustible, and which must be depended on for the regeneration of American literature” (qtd. in Denning 22). However, the stigma attached to writing and reading dime novels never dissipated; in literary circles, they remained “flamboyant, inaccurate, poorly written and poorly printed action stories of all types” with nothing to recommend their worth to society (Dizer 74). Yet, despite being continually under attack by mainstream society, dime novels remained popular well into the early-twentieth century (Dizer 74). In the unbeatable characters of Nick Carter and Old Sleuth, or the indomitable hero of an Alger story, dime novels tapped into a sense of optimism, whether for personal advancement or national uplift, while imagining the promising technological “lure of the future” that permeated mainstream American culture at the end of the nineteenth and the

[118] In Britain, Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe – mentioned in the previous chapter for his central role in British propaganda during World War I – was the foremost publisher of boys’ and girls’ books, including *The Boy’s Own Paper*, which, rather than facing censure, “became a great British institution” (Ashley, *Storytellers* 9).
[119] For a brief, but excellent, discussion of women and dime novels, see Smith, “Pulp Sensations,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction*, pp. 144-5.

early-twentieth century[120] (Goodstone xi; Umphlett 32). As Patricia Bradley writes, the atmosphere of the age was imbued with "a confidence that had no room for failure." (3) In this context, the worldview promoted by dime novels allowed "[w]ish and faith [to feed] upon themselves" in the imaginations of eager readers[121] (Fink 18).

However, by 1915, the mood of the nation was changing. The optimistic and melodramatic tales that had helped catapult characters like Nick Carter to national popularity were no longer finding a ready audience. Events, such as the April, 1912, sinking of the *R.M.S. Titanic*, allowed insecurities to creep into the blind confidence previously attributed to the technological advances of the age. Then, too, there was the war raging across Europe, spilling into Asia and Africa as European colonies and confederates were pulled into the conflict. Back home, the journalistic zeal of the "muckrakers" – those "working for the public weal through the medium of exposés or investigative reporting" – had reached its zenith in the first decade of the twentieth century and was steadily in decline (Panek, *Origins* 121). The certainty and hope that helped fuel the dominance of dime novels in popular American literature was eroding. At the offices of Street & Smith, the publishers of Nick Carter worried that their star detective might be growing stale. Quentin Reynolds described the behind-the-scenes discussions that led to a major shift in the history of the Nick Carter franchise, relating that the firm knew it was losing its young male audience and decided that their readers were "tired of reading about the same characters week after week" (173). The experimental solution to their waning readership was to "start a magazine that will have a dozen different detectives as characters" (ibid). And, so, on

[120] For a discussion of Alger's works as tales of optimism and uplift see, Nackenoff, p.11, and, Scharnhorst, *Lost Life*, p. 150.
[121] For more on the connected worldview espoused by Alger and dime novels, particularly Old Sleuth, as well as the overall influence of this worldview on American society, see, Hakutani, pp. 16-8.

October 5, 1915, the Nick Carter dime novel was abandoned and the pulp magazine *Detective Story* was born – with, of course, Nick Carter as nominal editor. The formula was a success and, by 1917, publication had increased from a semi-monthly to a weekly schedule (Reynolds 176). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the fictional exploits contained in *Detective Story* and imitators like *Mystery Magazine* (which debuted in November, 1917) initially retained strong links to their dime novel predecessors, the most important being that their detective characters continued to inhabit a "gaslit Victorian world" where, as Goulart states, detectives were "squarely on the side of the established system. None was a maverick or a cynic" (14).

By the end of the war, however, this would no longer be the case. The professional detectives filling the pages of the pulps no longer looked like Allan Pinkerton or Nick Carter, they were a different class altogether. Before the United States became involved in World War I or the subsequent peace talks of 1919, dime novel detective fiction was underpinned by the belief that the American worldview was, in its final estimation, intrinsically fair and right. Even if social ills and political corruption were evident throughout the nation, the proposed solutions to these problems were, for mainstream actors, girded by hope in the ultimate triumph of right and the conviction that anything wrong with the status quo could be fixed; in the pages of the dime novel detectives, the American system was always "'equated with goodness. Bankers are *good* people. Big business is *good* business. If left to its own device, the city could evolve into a Utopian society'" (Hoppenstand, qtd. in Rzepka 182). After the war, American pulp detectives no longer believed in the intrinsic justice of American society, no longer fought to save the system. Now tough and cynical, isolated and vulnerable, the pulp detective embodied a vigilante justice that recognized the disparities in American society, which led to the development of a personal code of justice. The transformation of the American pulp detective from genteel to

hard-boiled protagonist mirrored sweeping postwar transformations in the moral and social psyche of the nation. The seemingly minor event of Street & Smith adapting dime novel hero Nick Carter to *Detective Story* – the first popular publication of any kind to specialize in mystery fiction – paved the way for the emergence of the hard-boiled tradition, which would distinguish American detective fiction from the classical tradition of England and ultimately become the defining American detective genre in the twentieth century (Hoppenstand, *Paper Tiger* 63).

Chapter 3:

Dissonance

"They [critics] blamed jazz for the passing of conventions and the relaxation of behavioral restraints. Jazz performance and the jazz controversy provided opportunities for Americans to struggle over both personal and national post-World War I identities." – Kathy Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz*, pp. 139-40.

"I would like to say something about my generation. In the first place, I would like to observe that the older generation had certainly pretty well ruined this world before passing it on to us. They give us this Thing, knocked to pieces, leaky, red-hot, threatening to blow up; and then they are surprised that we don't accept it with the same attitude of pretty, decorous enthusiasm with which they received it, 'way back in the eighteen-nineties, nicely painted, smoothly running, practically fool-proof." – John F. Carter, Jr. "These Wild Young People," p. 61

"Returning from France with the hope that the world and the nation had been redeemed, American soldiers were met with a powerfully dissonant reality. They found fellow Americans in violent disagreement over ideals and their application." – Jonathan Ebel, *Faith in the Fight: Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War*, p. 176.

The Present And All That It Holds

On December 4, 1918, one week before James Reese Europe and the Harlem Hellfighters would begin their return trip to the United States and civilian life, Woodrow Wilson set sail for Paris as head of the American peace delegation. An armistice had been reached less than one month before on November 11 at what is now familiarly remembered as "the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" (Goldstein 1). Celebrations had already broken out in many parts of the world on November 7, when American journalist Roy Howard cabled the United Press offices in New York City with the false scoop that an armistice had been signed; word quickly spread, with Allied celebrations reaching across sections of the Western Front and as far away as Sydney, Australia, before Howard's mistake was corrected and order restored (Goldstein 69-77; Fredericks 235-6). A resident of Klamath Falls, Oregon, recalled the atmosphere of the false armistice in 1970, remembering that the "town turned loose, and for a time all order broke down […]. Everything that could whistle, blatt or toot was going to it. People ran out into the streets [.… and] autos zoomed up and down […]" (Spink Lorenz 275).

When news of an armistice again reached the United States on the morning of November 11, celebrations erupted for a second time, punctuated by an intensity of light – whether from bonfires, fireworks or the first pre-dawn illumination of the Statue of Liberty since America entered the war in 1917 – and an outpouring of singing and shouting crowds that surged into city streets as impromptu parades formed down major thoroughfares, signaling the intense relief of thousands (Goldstein 236-7). Relief was not merely due to the ceasing of hostilities, although that meaning was certainly at the forefront of celebrations.[122] The armistice also signaled a

[122] This type of relief may have been particularly strong among draftees, such as the eight hundred Bronx men awaiting an Army train at Grand Central Station when they heard news of

hopeful return to prewar comforts. The war had strained domestic resources, most notably in relation to food and fuel, causing communities across the country to institute enforced rationing of everyday items like coal and wheat (Moore, "Charleston" 44-5). Wartime prohibition – part effort to conserve food stuffs, part effort to maintain sobriety among raw recruits – had been enforced by local legislation and the Lever food-control bill until November, 1918, when the Eighteenth Amendment made prohibition nationally binding for the duration of hostilities. Back in Klamath Falls, Claudia Spink Lorenz recalled that the false armistice gave everyone license to ignore the law against liquor:

> Notwithstanding prohibition, the juice of the corn and grain was much in evidence, being resurrected from nooks and crannies, secret desk drawers and pockets. And in view of this momentous occasion, the rule was broken, the bars were let down, and [my friend] and I, with some other adolescents present, were permitted to be served *one* drink with a "spike" in it (275).

While the potential relief from the enforced deprivation of wartime rationing would have helped fuel armistice celebrations across the country, for others, the peace offered potential relief from a more internalized and volatile wartime strain. After years of neutrality, America's decision to wage war had been increasingly propagandized, whether by government agencies or local religious and social leaders, as a democratic crusade of medieval proportions being fought against a demonic Germany.[123] The crusading imperative of the war effort was recalled in glowing terms for the 1921 report on demobilization written by Benedict Crowell, who served as

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the peace. There were, however, men who regretted the end of the war coming before they could make it to the front lines (Goldstein 236-7).

[123] For a discussion of the crusading rhetoric of World War I in the United States, see, Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, pp. 2-3; Ebel, *Faith in the Fight*, pp. 23-8. According to historians, such as John Higham, mainstream Americans were psychologically prepared for the crusading rhetoric of wartime propaganda by the rhetoric of the Progressive Era, which "had built up a crusading spirit, a sense of dedication to high ideals. It had drawn powerfully on a modernized evangelical impulse, making the struggle against bosses and monopolists a way of battling for the Lord" (194). For more on the demonization of Germany, see, Zieger, *America's Great War*, p. 83.

Assistant Secretary of War and Director of Munitions from 1917-1920, and Robert Forrest Wilson, who served as a captain in the United States Army; their closing statement on the "benefits and gains" of the war effort in America came down to the uplifting and heroic belief in "an army of crusaders fighting to end wars forever.[…] This was to be Armageddon, the last of wars […]" (320). In the hysteria of the moment, the crusading zeal encouraged by such rhetoric helped create a homefront burdened by the need to actively prove its Americanism by supporting federal, state, and local government war initiatives without question or complaint.

For many, the burden to prove one's patriotism was alleviated by turning a critical eye on friends and neighbors, directing attention to anyone who seemed unenthusiastic about the war. Nationwide, newspapers hyped the need for vigilance with headlines like the Helena, Montana, *Independent*'s "YOUR NEIGHBOR, YOUR MAID, YOUR LAWYER, YOUR WAITER MAY BE A GERMAN SPY" or Tulsa's *Daily Word* advice to "[w]atch your neighbor. If he is not doing everything in his power to help the nation in this crisis, see that he is reported to the authorities" (Schaffer 20). War posters urged civilian Americans to join forces, creating community groups like the Vigilance Corps, designed to "discover and report every disloyal person and action in [their] community, and help the authorities suppress the activities of these destructive forces" (New Jersey Historical Society Figure C-15). Even the message of the U.S. Food Administration, an agency created in August 1917 and headed by Herbert Hoover, asking farmers to produce more and consumers to use less in order to alleviate the critical food shortage in Europe was presented as a clear choice between advancing either good or evil. In Missouri, for example, farmers being urged to increase production were met with slogans like "Conquer the Hun by Corn" and "Even a rusty rake is proof of lack of patriotism" (Gibbs 110-2). If reported for possible disloyalty, Missourians could expect to receive a color-coded card from their local

council of defense: “a white card for first-time offenders, a blue card for the second offense, and a red card ordering the person who received it to report to the local postmaster”[124] (Schaffer 19). With the onslaught of CPI propaganda and the threat of the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, Americans were being repeatedly and aggressively urged to monitor friends and neighbors to report any possible threat to the war effort, no matter how great or small, how overt or implied (Carruth 387-98).

The officially sanctioned repercussions faced by those deemed suspect by their communities could range anywhere from loss of local business to internment, but all experienced what Wilson called “the firm hand of repression” (Carruth 388). Even more threatening were the unsanctioned reprisals carried out by impassioned private citizens who believed they were doing their part for the war. With government agencies and mainstream media actively promoting civilian watchfulness, a host of local and national vigilance societies, like the aforementioned Vigilance Corps or the American Protective League (APL), formed under the belief that the welfare of the homefront depended on their watchful eyes; unfortunately, watchful eyes often turned to violent hands. Throughout the war, these vigilance groups – several of which “targeted pacifists, suffragists, ethnic minorities, religious fundamentalists, trade unionists, and socialists” – pursued their conception of homeland defense through vigilante “violent, spontaneous pro-war crowd actions” (Capozzola 123). For those struggling with the domestic repression and violence

[124] For an excellent discussion on the emergence of these wartime councils, see Schaffer, pp. 18-19. These councils, also known as public-safety committees or loyalty bureaus, became the most common point of contact for civilians to report on each other. The agencies were staffed by volunteers, but their authority was backed by local and state governments. “By 1918, there were 184,000 of these organizations arranged in a country-wide hierarchy, with a federal Council of National Defense at its apex” (18). See, also, Hegi, “’Old Time Good Germans’: German-Americans in Cooke County, Texas, during World War I,” pp. 240-1.

fostered by the war, celebrating the end of hostilities also meant celebrating the hopeful return of civil liberties and civic order (Connolly-Smith 19).

In Washington, D.C., President Wilson stood before Congress to deliver a brief statement on the end of the war and the expectations for the peace:

> The present and all that it holds belongs to the nations and the peoples who preserve their self-control and the orderly process of their Governments; the future to those who prove themselves the true friends of mankind.[…] I am confident that the nations that have learned the discipline of freedom and that have settled with self-possession to its ordered practice are now about to make conquest of the world by the sheer power of example and of friendly helpfulness.[…] The peoples who have but just come out from under the yoke of arbitrary government aid who are now coming at last into their freedom […] are now faced with their initial test. We must hold the light steady until they find themselves. And in the meantime, if it be possible, we must establish a peace that will justly define their place among the nations, remove all fear of their neighbours [sic] and of their former masters, and enable them to live in security and contentment when they have set their own affairs in order (288-9).

Wilson's address before Congress outlined the idealistic optimism and hope felt by mainstream Americans on Monday, November 11, 1918. With news of the peace it seemed for many Americans, as the Klamath Falls resident put it, that "all of the pent-up anxieties, hopes and forebodings erupted from each heavy heart and burst forth in one giant compounded geyser of relief and joy" (Spink Lorenz 275).

However, in communities across the country armistice celebrations devolved into evidence of the war-ramped animosities felt toward certain ethnic, religious and racial segments of the population. For some communities, even being rumored to be a "slacker" – the most common pejorative used to describe any civilian not doing their utmost for the war effort – could result in confrontation, regardless of one's demographics. In Evansville, Wisconsin, a

celebratory crowd converged on the home of a woman who was rumored to have shirked her patriotic duty by not subscribing during Liberty Loan drives. Although records indicate that the woman contributed to the war effort, buying war bonds and volunteering with the Red Cross, the Armistice Day crowd took her "from her home, placed [her] in a lion's cage salvaged from a junk dealer, and hauled [her] around the city square" (Falk 403). Even with the war newly won, these Wisconsin residents felt the need to punish, their sense of justice recalling the medieval ritual of public humiliation as clearly as mainstream war propaganda had recalled medieval crusades.

Elsewhere, in Burrton, Kansas, it was reported that a group of men pursued John Schragg, a Mennonite of Swiss-German descent who remained faithful to his religious creed by sitting out the war as a conscientious objector, in an attempt to force his participation in the Armistice celebrations. When he refused to take part, he was beaten, covered in yellow paint (signifying cowardice), and dragged to a tree where he would likely have been lynched. He was rescued by the deputy sheriff, who held "the mob back at gunpoint and arrest[ed] Schragg to save his life" (Goldstein 239). Even then, however, he was held in the city jail on a "raised platform" situated high enough that locals could "jeer at him through the window" (ibid). The war and its attendant propaganda engendered a "repressive atmosphere at home, where saying the wrong thing could land a man in jail, and being radical, or being black, or being foreign could get a man lynched" (Thomas, *Conscience* 2). Christopher Capozzola referred to the war as "the high point of one kind of political violence in American history, as the actions of repressive state institutions, private organizations, and spontaneous crowds left more than seventy Americans dead and thousands terrorized by tar, flame, or the noose" (117).

Not surprisingly, the heightened animosities of wartime America did not dissipate with the declaration of peace; instead, they were held against – and often consumed within – a steadfast belief in the postwar opportunity for lasting reform and worldwide purification. As Henry May relates, the "outpouring of hate [brought on by the war] was matched by an equally irrational crescendo of hope" for the temperament of the future (388). For these individuals, the horrors and sacrifice of total war were expected to reveal a world made purer by the ordeal, in which a regenerative idealism would take hold and the surviving youth of the belligerent nations would turn "away from sexual [and, presumably, other kinds of] impurity"[125] (ibid). Mainstream Americans were continuously met with this kind of sentiment, as in the copy from a full-page newspaper advertisement placed by the Elgin Watch Company on November 9, 1918: "Do you think we don't know the biggest thing that issued from this awful struggle? Ah, but we do. It has purified and burned clear the high white flame of true Americanism" (Bachin 942). The highly fraught emotional atmosphere of the homefront at the end of World War I is captured, for Capozzola, in the previously mentioned prominence of light – specifically fire – in Armistice celebrations across the country. In the numerous bonfires and burnings reported on November 11, Capozzola sees evidence of both the "communal fires of festive celebration" and "thinly veiled threats: reminders of the episodes of hatred and bitterness that had enforced a vision of the war and cowed its opponents into silent acquiescence" (208). According to Capozzola, the mood of many Americans at the end of the Great War was "relief mixed with anger, trepidation, and the desire for revenge. The war still felt somehow unfinished"[126] (ibid).

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[125] For more on the optimistic reform spirit at the end of the war, see Dumenil, pp. 22-3, and Higham, pp. 269-70.
[126] For more on the mood of continued belligerency in the United States following the Armistice, see Murray, pp. 14-5.

Culture A Furious Battleground

The war, in many ways, was unfinished. Aside from the political failure of the Treaty of Versailles, which would contribute to the outbreak of another war in 1939, the immediate aftermath of World War I left Americans grappling with the numerous social issues that had threatened the peace of the homefront during the conflict.[127] Now, freed from the unifying context of winning the war, these issues offered myriad avenues by which the nation could be, depending on one's outlook, either restored or rebuilt. While some Americans certainly were "less aware of the issues," many of the sweeping social changes of the 1920s were continuations of the struggles brought to an emotional boiling point during the war and, as such, garnered overwhelming attention in the press and gathered dedicated (sometimes extremist) supporters in the trenches of everyday life, seeming to divide the country in two (Leonard 2). As Susan Currell notes, "[t]he recovery of society and democracy appeared intertwined with the building of national cultural values on a new world stage, yet there was no consensus on the shape that this new culture should take" (7).

For some, a return to the traditional Victorian ideals that dominated the prewar years seemed the best – really, the only – way forward; for others, the war had seemed to shatter any faith in traditional values, meaning that the future required a complete break from the prewar ideals that had, in this scenario, failed to protect millions from slaughter. John Dewey attempted to summarize the difficulty of the postwar situation:

> […] the formation of a new, coherent view of nature and man based upon facts consonant with science and actual social conditions is still to be had. What we call the Victorian Age seemed to have such a philosophy. It was a philosophy of hope, of progress, of all that is called liberalism. The growing sense of unsolved social

[127127] For an excellent summary of many of the most significant domestic struggles that would come to define the immediate aftermath of World War I in the United States, see Ogren, pp. 3-4.

> problems, accentuated by the war, has shaken that faith. It is impossible to recover its mood (qtd. in Currell 33).

These competing visions for the future of the nation created a deep schism in which "culture [became] a furious battleground where ideological commitments were developed in a crucible of uncertainty and change" (Currell 2).

On the frontlines of this furious battleground, jazz was not simply music – it was a statement, a line drawn in the sand placing the individual on one side or the other of what was becoming a recognized culture war in the United States. The obsession with popular music as a signifier of larger cultural issues is repeated often in the twentieth century, most notably in response to the emergence of rock 'n roll in the 1950s and rap in the 1990s[128] (Anderson 135). However, the social preoccupation with jazz in the aftermath of World War I was unprecedented. Neil Leonard helps explain something of the significance of this intense social response to jazz:

> Such excitement over music on the part of so many Americans was extraordinary. Previously music had caused relatively little excitement because it seemed largely irrelevant to practical matters. Most Americans thought of it in terms of entertainment, often pleasant but of minor importance. Even traditional academic music, which the arbiters of musical taste urged upon the public as a strong social and moral force, seemed to have little to do with the pressing concerns of most people. But after World War I many Americans began to take music more seriously, when they found that jazz was strongly connected with social and moral problems which could not be ignored. These social and moral implications made the jazz controversy part of the bitter conflict between the relative norms which were gaining currency and traditional, absolute values (30).

As Kathy Ogren summarized, "the music represented the end of an earlier era and the transition to a modern one" (7).

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[128] See, also, Kamin, "Parallels in the Social Reactions to Jazz and Rock" in *The Black Perspective in Music*, 3:3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 278-98.

We Are Musical Anarchists

The centrality of jazz to the culture wars of the postwar decade resulted, in large part, because jazz managed to encapsulate aspects of the most visible battles being waged for the heart and soul of the nation; as one commentator decrying the influence of jazz in America in 1920 wrote, "[j]azz is at once a symptom and a cause" (qtd. in Koenig 146). The timeliness of jazz – its ability to signify what was at stake in the minds of so many Americans throughout the 1920s – led commentators on either side of the culture debate to cite the same jazz-based activities and attitudes as evidence in the ongoing struggle; according to Lawrence Levine, "jazz was often praised for possessing precisely those characteristics that made it anathema to those who condemned it" (13).

While the struggle to define American culture through jazz would become entrenched in 1920s ideology, the intense public outcry for normalcy in the initial aftermath of the war led many mainstream observers to predict the death of the music. One such observer, writing in *Literary Digest* in June, 1920, took it as a given that jazz would die out once "the world returns to moral and physical health" (qtd. in Koenig 141). Another observer, writing in *Melody* in December, 1920, echoed this sentiment:

> Civilization has begun to revolt against the wrong kind of syncopation, this so-called "jazz," which during the more unrestrained period of the war swept the country with a crop of immodesty in both song and dance in its wake. […] The American "jazz" craze has been like a popular celebration – for a day or two all is enthusiasm, flags and speeches. Soon it wanes and dies its natural death. "Jazz" is now dying that natural death […] (qtd. in Koenig 149).

The national impulse toward normalcy – the expected return to moral and physical health – was crystalized in the presidential election of 1920, which saw Warren Harding beat his Democratic challenger James Cox and running mate Franklin Delano Roosevelt by a margin of almost two to

one. (Welky 19) In a now-famous speech, Harding urged Americans to "get out of the fevered delirium of war" by accepting that:

> America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise […] (Welky 19-20).

What could be further from the sedate tranquility preached by Harding than the "sheer aural blasphemy" of jazz (Farmer 146).

However, the image of dispassionate peace promoted by Harding in 1920 and joined by some with the expected demise of jazz was never really an option. In the immediate aftermath of November 11, a startling series of political, racial, and social conflicts disintegrated any impression that the people of the United States were a peacefully unified populace. Perhaps the most sensationalized of these conflicts were the labor strikes, bomb threats and riots of 1919 that helped usher in the roughly two-year Red Scare, which saw wartime hysteria against foreigners and other "slackers" transferred to Bolsheviks, who were presumed to all be radicalized anarchists (Murray 16; Pfannestiel 29-30). The mainstream press and vigilance societies left over from the war hyped any possible evidence of radical activity, circulating any information "associating radicalism with extreme violence" (Pfannestiel 30).

Certainly, in some cases, the threat of violence was explicit. For instance, a February, 1919, poster disseminated through Boston read:

> The senile fossils ruling the United States see red! […] The storm is within and very soon will leap and crash and annihilate you in blood and fire. You have shown no pity to us! We will do like-wise […] We will dynamite you![129] (Murray 69).

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[129] While Murray dates this poster to early February, 1919, Pfannestiel gives the date as January, 1919.

However, as Stanley Coben has noted, radical organizations at work in the United States at this time were generally "disorganized and poverty-stricken" – the violent anarchists typically existing as "tiny, unconnected local organizations" (64-5). Even so, the response to perceived radicalism at the local or national level was often swift and violent, mirroring the vigilante-style patriotism conjured during the war and, amid such unchecked emotions, any "who seemed to upset the 'return to normalcy' or lack the patriotic fervor following World War I were labeled 'aliens,' 'outsiders,' and 'radicals'" (Bachin 955).

In Washington, D.C., for instance, a man attending a victory loan pageant on May 6, 1919, failed to stand for the national anthem; he was observed by a sailor in the crowd who, apparently enraged by this perceived lack of patriotism, shot the man in the back three times. According to reports in the *Washington Post*, "the crowd burst into cheering and handclapping" when the attacked man collapsed from his wounds (Coben 52). Just days earlier, on May Day, 1919, the nation witnessed an outburst of violent raids and riots amid reports of Bolshevik plots to bomb leading capitalists and government officials. Among the events of the day, a group of recently returned veterans raided a Russian immigrant social club in New York City known as the Russian People's House; all of the printed materials that could be gathered were burned in the street and Russians on the premises were forced to sing the *Star Spangled Banner* (Pfannestiel 31). This same group of World War I veterans later joined a larger mob, estimated to be around 400 people, at the offices of the socialist newspaper, The New York *Call*, destroying property and beating seventeen individuals associated with the publication (Pfannestiel 31-2). An English journalist described the postwar mood of the nation in 1919:

> No one who was in the United States as I chanced to be, in the autumn of 1919, will forget the feverish condition of the public mind at that time. It was hag-ridden by the spectre of Bolshevism. It was like a sleeper in a nightmare, enveloped by a thousand

> phantoms of destruction. Property was in an agony of fear, and the horrid name 'Radical' covered the most innocent departure from conventional thought with a suspicion of desperate purpose (Murray 17).

In the midst of this national paranoia, jazz was often described by adherents in terms of its radical musical and social qualities, which were seen by enthusiasts as the promising transformative impulses of a postwar society freeing itself from the so-called puritanical restraints of prewar Victorian life (Ogren 6-7; Levine 13-4). In the midst of the Red Scare hysteria, some jazz musicians even explicitly played on the fears of the nation to increase the provocative interpretation of their music; for instance, Nick LaRocca of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band had this to say in an April, 1920, interview published in the *Palais Dancing News*:

> […] jazz is the assassination, the murdering, the slaying of syncopation. In fact, it is a revolution in this kind of music […]. I even go so far as to confess we are musical anarchists […] (Parsonage 135).

With such blatantly inflammatory statements, it is hardly surprising that Americans in the grip of the Red Scare, afraid of anything that might threaten cultural stability, reacted to jazz as a disease in postwar society that needed to be eradicated, with critics often using words like "'pathological,' 'infection,' 'virus,' 'epidemic,' and 'cancer'" to describe the music they believed was "undermining the nation's physical, mental, and moral" strength (Johnson, "Disease" 14).

A Hell Of A Country

Exacerbating the climate of postwar hysteria was the disruptive experience of demobilization. In just the initial wave of disbandment, between November 11, 1918, and June 30, 1919, the United States discharged approximately 2.6 million servicemen and 128,000 officers who were either "already home from France or on their way" (Krugler 52). Of this

number, roughly 200,000 were returning African American troops[130] (Clement 534). On being discharged, all soldiers received a small bonus – typically two months' pay, equal to about sixty dollars (Clement 534-5). Also returning home, but entirely "without recognition or benefits," were an estimated 25,000 women who had worked for the American Expeditionary Force in France in a variety of roles, including "nurses [….] canteen workers, doctors, physical therapists, clerical workers, entertainers, journalists, ambulance drivers, and telephone operators"[131] (Frahm 273, 275).

For different reasons, the wartime service of these men and women provided revelatory experiences that altered worldviews upon returning home. For many mainstream soldiers, especially those from rural backgrounds, the revelation came in seeing something of their country and the world via training camps and battlefields (Fredericks 189). For African American troops, it was revelatory to be treated with a measure of dignity and affection by French soldiers and civilians (Rosenberg 616-7). For women, wartime service proved revelatory in providing the means by which thousands of women could escape the confines of domesticity while pursuing "an opportunity for professional assimilation" (More 637).

Yet, for each of these groups, returning to the United States failed to fulfill the expected promise of their experiences abroad. Perhaps the most immediate problem facing returning servicemen and women was that the country was not economically ready for the rapid influx of laborers being demobilized. As economist Wesley C. Mitchell wrote in December, 1919:

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[130] A rough total of 350,000 African Americans enlisted during World War I, but not all made it to Europe before the Armistice in November, 1918. All were, however, discharged with the end of the war. See Clement, "Problems of Demobilization and Rehabilitation of the Negro Soldier After World War I and II," p. 534.

[131] The female telephone operators, or "Hello Girls," attached to the AEF during World War I were finally awarded honorable discharges from the U.S. Army in 1979, after a sixty year campaign led by Merle Egan Anderson to be recognized (Frahm 275).

> Just when we were getting really organized for war we were confronted with the shattering prospect of peace. That meant the cancellation of war orders, the discharge of thousands of war workers, and the return of about four million soldiers and sailors to civilian life (Lauterbach 504).

According to the demobilization report written in 1921 by Crowell and Wilson, "it took seven million workers, men and women, to operate the war industrial machine […]" (2). With the war over, employment became a contentious issue. Approximately four million men had enlisted in the armed forces when the United States joined the war effort in 1917 and those that came home again from what Theodore Roosevelt had termed the "great adventure" expected to find jobs waiting.

Instead of jobs, however, many initially found themselves at a loss for what to do or where to go; it became common in major cities to see hundreds of veterans, "many still in their uniforms, […] mill[ing] about the streets […]" (Krugler 54). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

> the returned "heroes" were often left to cool their heels in employment offices or to walk the streets in search of any kind of employment that would keep body and soul together. In the larger cities, many took to peddling "welcome home" signs and various small articles, which they displayed on street corners and in house-to-house canvassing, while still in uniform" (1062).

Many of these soldiers made their way to the nearest urban center and stayed, despite high unemployment, causing the nation's cities to fill up with bored, broke young men. The trend toward urbanization was commented on across the country, as in this piece from an employment bureau in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 13, 1919:

> Yanked by the draft from the quiet and peaceful pursuits of husbandry and hurled into the vortex of war the soldier boy from the rural districts is now yearning for the bright lights of the city. He has had too much excitement to return to the farm (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1063).

For African American veterans, returning to the homefront meant not only competing for jobs, but readjusting to the racism being in France had, to a degree, alleviated. This readjustment took on new complexities as veterans realized how much the racial landscape of America had changed during the war. Now, the venom of racism was spread like never before into the northern states due, in part, to the Great Migration, which brought thousands of African American laborers to industrial jobs in the North as part of the war effort. With an estimated five million men unemployed in 1920, the African Americans who had moved north following war-based labor opportunities were now perceived by some as unwelcome interlopers adding to the strain on local economies (Lauterbach 524). Also impacting this situation was the fact that "wartime military service" and "Wilson's incessant call for democracy" raised the hopes and expectations of returning African American servicemen that they would find a new measure of justice in their own country (Goldberg 89).

Instead, the African American press reported cases of violence, such as that perpetrated against veteran Wilbur Little who was beaten to death by a mob in Blakely, Georgia, because he ignored warnings to stop wearing his military uniform in public (Krugler 51). The outrage of these fresh betrayals led to a greater embracing of African American militancy. W.E.B. DuBois wrote in May, 1919, that America had:

> organized a nation-wide and latterly a world-wide propaganda of deliberate and continuous insult and defamation of black blood wherever found. It decrees that it shall not be possible in travel nor residence, work nor play, education nor instruction for a black man to exist without tacit or open acknowledgment of his inferiority to the dirtiest white dog. And it looks upon any attempt to question or even discuss this dogma as arrogance, unwarranted assumption and treason (Welky 12).

By referencing propaganda and the accusation of treason for questioning the dogma of racism in the United States, DuBois brought to mind the wartime call for one hundred percent

Americanism that was bolstered by propaganda and surveillance, suggesting that African Americans would never be allowed to measure up as full-fledged Americans under current conditions. In response to the postwar violence, DuBois and other African American leaders issued a new call-to-arms: "[…] by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land" (Welky 12). For yet another segment of the American population, war was far from over.

For women, too, the "expectations and hopes that World War I would radically alter […] prejudices" concerning women's appropriate sphere proved mostly unfounded (Greenwald 154). Although women won a major victory by gaining the right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment on June 4, 1919, with ratification following on August 18, 1920, the wartime gains made by untold numbers of women – particularly in the field of labor – were halted and reversed with the declaration of peace; while women had moved "into the public sphere in greater numbers" than ever before achieved in the United States, the predominant attitude in America still held the belief that "women's primary role was in the home"[132] (Dumenil 122). Even where wartime gains were not wholly abolished, women typically found that they "were welcome to come in as workers, but not as co-makers of the world. For all their numbers, they seldom rose to positions of responsibility or power" (ibid).

Although arising from very different factors, the mood of many returning servicemen and women and their counterparts who had held down the homefront was one of disillusionment.

[132] Of course, not all women were in favor of suffrage. For instance, in her article "Parlors, Politics, and Privilege: Clubwomen and the Failure of Woman Suffrage in Lafayette Louisiana, 1897-1922," Barbara Smith Corrales tracks the apathy of elite social clubwomen toward women's suffrage due to a desire to "preserve their social status and increasingly outdated Victorian ideals;" as Corrales illustrates, for some women "patriarchy was preferable to political equality" (469, 471).

After winning what was billed as the war to end all wars – the modern world's crusade for democracy – many Americans felt they had earned a triumphant victory followed by a tranquil peace; instead they found price inflation and unemployment, heightened racism, heightened sexism, and the looming threat of cultural and political anarchy. The bewildering sense of being somehow cheated was, perhaps, summed up by one wounded veteran in St. Louis, Missouri, who stated mockingly, upon learning that his prewar job, which had earned forty cents an hour, was now only worth 27.5 cents despite the higher cost of living, that "it was a hell of a country he had been fighting for" (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1067).

The Jazz Center Of The World

Throughout the chaos of these early postwar years, Chicago acted as a vortex of all the trends and fears challenging the sociocultural status quo of the nation; even the national pastime of baseball, promoted during the war as "the greatest single force working for Americanization," was pulled into the vortex with the Black Sox scandal of 1919[133] (Bachin 941). As a flashpoint for many of the challenges facing postwar America, it is perhaps not surprising that Chicago also became "the jazz center of the world"[134] (Ostransky 68). Prior to World War I, Chicago had received its fair share of good and bad press: there was the 1893 triumph of the World's Columbian Exposition, but this was tempered by events like the 1886 Haymarket Riot and literary depictions like Upton Sinclair's 1906 expose of the city's meatpacking industry in *The*

[133] Robin Bachin provides an excellent study of the Black Sox scandal and its relationship to postwar tensions in the article, "At the Nexus of Labor and Leisure: Baseball, Nativism, and the 1919 Black Sox Scandal." Bachin explores ways in which the scandal "became a symbol of the rising post-war tensions over labor relations, race, ethnicity, and nationalism in America" as well as "a vehicle for circumscribing the meanings of Americanism" (941).

[134] As Ostransky hastens to point out, early jazz studies often oversimplified the evolution of the music from New Orleans to Chicago. As he indicates, "[a]lthough jazz and the makings of jazz could be heard in other cities, in the years just before and after the war Chicago became its focal point" (62).

Jungle. In 1914, Carl Sandburg described Chicago as a wicked, crooked and brutal city "proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning" (qtd. in Coles and Zandy 310-11).

The moral wickedness of Chicago was certainly beyond question. Before the 1890s, Chicago was considered a wide-open city for vice. Like New Orleans, a designated vice district was created, known as the Levee, where individuals could find an array of gambling dens and brothels accompanied by freely flowing liquor. The Levee was prosperous, with nearby rail lines providing a steady stream of transient clientele who made easy targets for criminals like the infamous Mickey Finn, and with local citizens and officials readily ignoring any laws attempting to curtail the fun; the district was so prosperous, in fact, that even city mayors held property in the area[135] (Duis 232-3, 237). In preparation for the 1893 World's Fair, however, city reformers began concerted efforts to clean up the Levee district, which meant tackling issues of civic corruption while attempting to dismantle the worst concentrations of vice (Keire 20; Duis 245-6).

At the top of many reform agendas were attempts to silence locations where "the sensuous strains of live music promoted promiscuity" by "bann[ing] performances where liquor was sold" (Duis 253). Such locations included a number of German beer gardens that employed bands, as well as dance halls and concert saloons, where "musical showmanship, liquor, and sex" combined to create what Perry Duis described as "a department store of vice" (253, 237-8). Among the musically-inclined drinking establishments one might have read about in district directories, such as *Chicago by Day and Night*, was the Pekin Inn, which was the first African American club in Chicago to employ musicians "closely associated with ragtime and pre-jazz popular music" (Kenney 5). Reform organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance

[135] Duis relates how Chicago "added a word to the American lexicon through the exploits of the real Mickey Finn, a dive owner who robbed his patrons after serving them knockout drops. From 1898 through 1903 Finn and his wife, 'Gold Tooth Mary,' operated the Lone Star amidst a row of brothels just south of the Loop" (233).

Union (WCTU) began joining arguments against alcohol and vice to arguments against the persuasive power of popular music emerging from clubs like the Pekin. At the same time, newspapers and sensation books, with titles like *From the Dance Hall to Hell*, connected these locations to broader threats, such as the white slave trade[136] (Duis 263-4).

By 1910, frustrated with the lack of progress being made, city officials and reformers unveiled the unprecedented Chicago Vice Commission, which considered dance halls a "major villain" of vice (Keire 20-1, Duis 262). In the resulting pressure of the Vice Commission, the Levee district was closed in 1912, but the morally threatening mixture of alcohol and dance music failed to disappear "as 86,000 youngsters a night thronged hundreds of obscure halls, most of which were thought to be controlled by 'saloon and vice interests'" (Kenney 63; Duis 269-70). During World War I, clubs in the city moved into "small, poorly ventilated, dirty, makeshift cellars with close geographical and historical ties to Chicago's vice district" (ibid).

As these clubs spread out from the defunct Levee district, African American entertainment became firmly rooted in "South Side Chicago, particularly 'The Stroll,'" which "came alive with a fast moving, free-spending night life" (Kenney 14). The South Side, known alternately as the Black Belt or the Black Metropolis, consolidated into a "long, narrow north-south strip" with cabarets and dance halls "clustered between 28th and 35th on or near State [Street]" (Vincent 46). It was a space in which African American "entrepreneurs, war veterans, artists, politicians, and intellectuals in Chicago attempted to build a separate economic and

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[136] Not all of the fears expressed in Chicago's reform literature were unfounded. In 1909, the Chicago-St. Louis Gang was discovered and disbanded. "Maurice Van Bever, its organizer and the owner of a Levee saloon, implicated several members of the Chicago police in the plot to circulate victims between the two cities" (Duis 264). Bever and his wife served one year in prison, leaving their saloon in the hands of associates "Big Jim" Colosimo and Johnny Torrio, who would become prominent during the gang wars of 1920s Chicago. The Mann Act became a federal law in 1910 as a direct result of the Chicago-St. Louis Gang (ibid).

institutional worldview" distinct from mainstream America (Baldwin 123). The profitability of entertainment venues quickly became apparent (Vincent 126). Between 1917 and 1921, the number of cabarets in the neighborhood skyrocketed and, by mid-decade, this narrow strip of entertainment venues was so saturated with jazz that one musician imagined "if you held up an instrument the breeze would play it" (Vincent 46; Ogren 61).

The allure of these South Side clubs, for both musicians and audiences, was in part due to the high volume of black-and-tan cabarets, where African American performers "catered to both blacks and whites" allowing for a "relatively freer interracial mingling"[137] (Kenney 16-7). Chicago's black-and-tan establishments began appearing in large numbers on the South Side "[d]uring and just after the war" in response to both "black immigration and to white Chicago's growing awareness of what the Chicago *Tribune* […] called 'the incoming hordes of Negroes'" (ibid). The first South Side black-and-tan actually opened a few years earlier, in July 1912, with ex-prize fighter Jack Johnson's Café de Champion; however, the trend did not really take hold until the outbreak of World War I when the "cabaret and dance hall business then capitalized on the influx of African American[s]" migrating from the South[138] (Vincent 44-5).

As the number of cabarets and dance halls offering the latest jazz music increased and word of their comparatively relaxed race policy spread, musicians who had found their way to

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[137] As Kenney notes, black-and-tan establishments "pursued differing [race] policies according to a variety of factors" and some "changed their racial policies according to economic and political pressures" (17).

[138] The Café de Champion did not remain in business for long. In 1913, Johnson was convicted of violating the Mann Act and fled to Mexico for a time, from where he published advertisements in New York's African American socialist monthly the *Messenger*, urging African Americans to move to Mexico to escape racial prejudice (Vincent 45). See, also, Haller, "Policy Gambling, Entertainment, and the Emergence of Black Politics: Chicago From 1900 to 1940," p. 723.

the South Side began enticing friends to move north.[139] As Sidney Bechet recalled, starting in 1917, "a whole lot of musicianers started to leave New Orleans for up North, mostly for Chicago" and, once there:

> they was all writing back to New Orleans that work was plentiful, telling the New Orleans musicianers to come up. That's how Freddie Keppard, Bill Johnson, George Baquet, Kid Ory, Mutt Carey, Tig Chambers all come up from New Orleans (Ostransky 64).

Economic opportunity was also at the heart of the move to the South Side. As William Howland Kenney relates,

> From 1910 to 1916, New Orleans musicians had earned between $1.50 and $2.50 per engagement, plus tips, which could double that sum. After World War I, South Side Chicago cabarets paid sidemen a weekly salary of around $40 which also could be supplemented by tips. […] Orchestra leaders and solo stars, of course, earned more than sidemen (13).

Furthermore, Chicago drew musicians because it was home to the first American Federation of Labor (AFL) local for African American musicians in the country, had a "highly competitive church music scene," and offered the opportunity to study at the Chicago University of Music (Vincent 46-7). As Ted Vincent notes, "[g]ood musicianship and a spillover talent from one field to another marked the career of many South Side artists" (47). Within this comparatively supportive framework, the South Side clubs "encouraged intense musical competition" among performers, drawing musicians in to test their chops while ultimately helping to generate profound advances in the development and dissemination of jazz,

[139] The interracial policy of many South Side black-and-tans was discussed by African American musicians like Willie "the Lion" Smith who, after performing at the Fiume Café for several months in 1923, said "there was a lot more mixing of the races in Chicago at the time than there was in New York. I sure found the 'toddlin' town' to be real friendly" (Kenney 17).

simultaneously promoting a newfound “respect for black music among black audiences”[140] (Kenney 4; Ogren 51-3).

However, this supportive framework did not go unchallenged. In one of the worst incidents of what would become known as the Red Summer, during which approximately 26 race riots occurred between April and October, 1919, Chicago erupted into seven days of intermittent fighting that resulted in 38 deaths, more than 500 injuries, and roughly 1,000 homeless families (Collins 71, 99). The riot began on July 27, when seventeen-year-old Eugene Williams crossed “an imaginary boundary […] partitioning the African American and white sections” of Lake Michigan and drowned in the midst of a stone-throwing fight already in progress between a group of white and black swimmers on the beach. The rioting broke out amid rumors that Williams was deliberately hit by one of the white men who had been throwing stones, followed by word that an African American involved in the stone-throwing fight, rather than the white man implicated in Williams’ death, was arrested by a policeman who had been patrolling nearby.[141]

Efforts to affix blame for the Chicago riot quickly devolved into menacing theories. Some mainstream press outlets argued that the rash of riots erupting across the country were actually “inspired and directed by Bolshevik agents” (Dumenil 219; Cohen, “Riots” 381-2). This argument expanded the prevalent wartime fear among southern whites that German agents were actively inciting rebellion among African Americans (Keith 143; Ripley 264). In a related vein,

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[140] The desirability among African Americans of seeking employment as a musician in Chicago during the 1920s is evident in the fact that, “between 1920 and 1930, 525 black men and 205 black women described their occupation as musician” (Ostransky 88).

[141] The situation in Chicago was made worse by intense ethnic rivalry, particularly in relation to the city’s Irish population, in response to drastic housing shortages due to the population influx of minority laborers during the war years. See Collins, *All Hell Broke Loose*, pp. 96-8; Wisseman, “Beware the Yellow Peril and Behold the Black Plague: The Internationalization of American White Supremacy and its Critiques, Chicago 1919,” pp. 56-8.

the threat of a newly radicalized African American population was reported in a memorandum to the Director of Military Intelligence, dated August 15, 1919, which stated:

> Since the demobilization of the colored organizations, the grievances of colored officers and enlisted men against white officers for alleged discriminatory treatment, and the absence of color prejudice among the French, as noted by the colored soldiers in A.E.F., have become matters of common knowledge among the colored people of this country. As a consequence, there is now a more fertile soil in which to plant the seeds of extreme radicalism (Cohen, "Riots" 387).

In fixing the blame for the Chicago riot, specifically, mainstream fears of a radicalized African American community converged on the expanding cultural presence of the South Side, with commentaries citing "hostility toward interracial mingling in 'black and tan' cabarets" as a contributing factor of the riot (Ogren 61).

Significantly, in the course of the Chicago riot, some African American leaders altered the rhetoric of their response to the violence, beginning "provocatively to claim that African American assertiveness – rather than racist oppression and cruelty – was a root cause of the riot. […] publicly recasting the riot itself as a demand for equality" (Coit 239). That such assertiveness emerged in response to the Chicago riot is, perhaps, not surprising in light of the entrepreneurial assertiveness developing among African Americans in conjunction with the ownership of South Side businesses, including jazz clubs. Throughout the early years of the 1920s, these entertainment venues were almost universally owned and operated by African American entrepreneurs who sought to "improve the standard of living and political power of the black community" by hiring "significant numbers of neighborhood men and women as floor managers, entertainers, musicians, cooks, barmen, waiters, doormen, and janitors […]" (Kenney 4, 10).

Beyond the success of South Side clubs, these entrepreneurs became active in fields like record and movie production, as well as professional sports, while the neighborhood became the first in the country, as Chicago's Second Ward, to elect an African American as City Council Alderman (Kenney 5). As Kenney suggests, jazz became "deeply woven" into the supportive framework of cultural, economic, and civic activities shaping the Black Metropolis[142] (4). Ted Vincent gives just one example of this interconnectedness:

> In 1917 [Café de Champion owner Jack] Johnson's saloon-keeper friend Bill Bottoms opened Chicago's Dreamland Café. Early in 1918 Bottoms provided financial help to his housemate Virgil Williams, who subsequently opened the Royal Gardens dance hall. What had been a hall featuring white bands was refitted by Williams in the bench-seating style of black New Orleans dance halls. Williams then brought in New Orleans musicians. In 1919 Bottoms and Williams joined forces with Frank Preer, the proprietor of the DeLuxe Café, to help fund the Chicago *Whip*, their own advertising weekly for cabarets and clubs. The publication was edited by lawyer Joseph Bibb, whose sister Eloise Bibb Thompson was the Chicago representative for Black Swan Records, the foremost black American record company of the Jazz Age (45-6).

Don't Be So Damn Dumb

Not all South Side residents encouraged these neighborhood developments. Disapproval tended to break along class lines, with "Old Settler" elites typically proclaiming their distance from wartime southern migrants by asserting Victorian attitudes of respectability (Baldwin 128-9; Kenney 26). For these men and women, jazz was an explosive element at the center of a neighborhood transformation that put the entire South Side at risk; in the aftermath of the Chicago riot, many discussed what was perceived as "the racial amusement problem," arguing

[142] It is important to contextualize the black entrepreneurial framework of the South Side by noting that "the place of blacks in Chicago's entertainment renaissance was ambiguous" as most of the city's nightlife existed outside of the Black Belt where "black customers were usually barred, and there were often barriers to the hiring of black entertainers as well" (Haller 726).

that “it was the vulgar behaviors and southern ways migrants brought with them ‘like a disease’ that brought on racial tensions and violence” (Baldwin 129). Even the *Chicago Defender* blamed the increased postwar racism on migrants, reporting that “their ignorance of laws and customs necessary for the maintenance of health, sobriety and morality among the people in general, have given our enemies cause for complaint” (Kenney 114).

This fear of ignorance, of reinforcing mainstream prejudices portraying African Americans as “shiftless, dissolute and immoral,” was tied to issues of respectability and a desire to avoid “attracting negative attention” or embarrassment to the black community (Baldwin 129; Kenney 114). Certainly, many migrants from the South were unprepared for the size and scope of cities like Chicago. Louis Armstrong, who arrived in Chicago in August, 1922, recalled his first impressions of the city: “I’d never seen a city that big. All those tall buildings. I thought they were universities” (Stein 203). In another version of this story, this one based on Armstrong’s first arrival in St. Louis with Fate Marable’s riverboat band, Armstrong recalls asking Marable if all the tall buildings are colleges, to which Marable allegedly responded, “Aw boy, […] don’t be so damn dumb” (ibid). Country manners and fashions also set many migrants from the South apart. For instance, even the jazz musicians Armstrong initially performed with in Chicago were, in the words of Armstrong’s future wife Lil Hardin, “very disgusted” with his clothes and behavior (Stein 204).

However, while South Side elites and music commentators like Dave Peyton of the *Chicago Defender* dismissed jazz as “sensational noise” and its musicians as lacking in skill, sobriety, and urbanity, it was actually these musicians, “even more than most immigrants to Chicago,” who “learned the new urban standards of manners and personal hygiene,” becoming “models of urban sophistication” (Ogren 115; Kenney 37). South Side elites traditionally defined

their social position “within the outward appearance and behavior of economic thrift, bodily restraint and functional modesty” (Baldwin 128). This positioning played against stereotypes of the “minstrel dandy [who] fails at being ‘civilized’ and ‘high class’” because his “exaggerated style and dress” announce that he is “a clumsy imitator of allegedly superior white models” (Stein 205). Yet, in the entrepreneurial climate of the Black Metropolis, jazz musicians were at the vanguard of a reorientation that claimed “brash, public displays of style, sexuality and even citizenship” as respectable, even sometimes acting as “moments of dissent against White supremacy” (Baldwin 128).

The Ghost Of The Levee

While South Side residents adjusted to these internal transformations, external challenges also gripped the neighborhood. With the official closure of the Levee vice district in 1912, illicit activities began to reassemble in new neighborhoods, with the greatest concentration settling on the South Side. By the early 1920s, the city’s illicit activities “flourished” alongside the jazz clubs that brought interracial, cross-class crowds to the Stroll:

> The traditional gambling, drug and sex trades moved into the area, along with a vast new underground liquor distribution system which appeared with the advent of national alcohol prohibition (Spillane 38).

The *Herald and Examiner* expressed the situation in vivid, if dramatic, fashion:

> They say the levee is dead. Perhaps it is, but the ghost of the levee is stalking about the streets and alleys of the South Side, manifesting unmistakable desires for resurrection (ibid).

Vice, as it developed in the wake of Prohibition, became significant to the sociocultural rise and diminution of South Side jazz clubs in the 1920s because, as Mara Keire states, the “closure of vice districts fundamentally altered America’s cityscape at the same time that Prohibition irrevocably changed the economics of vice” (115). National Prohibition was the

culmination of a temperance battle stretching back to the 1820s (Goldberg 54). In December, 1917, amid wartime food rationing and rampant anti-German sentiment, Congress passed the Lever food-control bill that "banned the use of foodstuffs in the production of distilled liquor," while simultaneously lowering the alcoholic content of beer (Pegram 146-7). At this time, 26 states, "representing more than half of the US population," were already dry due to local option laws (Hankins 25). Wartime prohibition was officially sanctioned on November 21, 1918 – ten days after Armistice – and, on January 6, 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment was officially ratified, signaling that "one year from that date, all of America would become prohibition territory" (Duis 301).

Before the passage of Prohibition, Chicago – well-known for its corruption and wide-open stance on vice – was a battleground for the temperance movement. Billy Sunday, one of the nation's leading evangelicals, led a highly publicized prohibition crusade in the city from March 10 to May 20, 1918; he announced his arrival, which replaced front-page war reportage in the *Tribune*, as the opening salvo of a spiritual war, in which:

> The whiskey gang, the infidels, and all of hell's outfit will fight me from the minute I step off the train, but, take it from me, I am ready for a fight and enjoy nothing better. I have slugged at 'em all for years and helped put the dirty booze bunch out of business all over the country (Fea 247).

Billy Sunday failed to put the "dirty booze bunch" out of business; even Prohibition failed to put them out. In fact, quite the opposite occurred. As Keire relates, Prohibition "opened up monopoly opportunities within urban vice" (116). By "controlling the alcohol supply to disreputable entertainment venues" gangsters "created highly lucrative crime cartels"[143] (ibid).

[143] Keire provides examples of the economic boon Prohibition proved to be for organized crime syndicates. For example, in 1912, Johnny Torrio managed a brothel in the Levee district that earned approximately $300 a week; in 1925, Torrio, along with Chicago's most notorious Jazz

At the same time, as a by-product of the expanding profit opportunities available through urban vice, Prohibition provided “a booming market for [jazz] musicians” (Allsop 171).

Slumming

The booming jazz market fostered by Prohibition was due, in part, to the irreverent moral and social statement now implicit in the act of drinking, which added to the thrill of visiting a jazz club where bootleg liquor was sold. As Keire notes, the restrictions of Prohibition resulted in the “glamorization” of bootleg alcohol consumption; jazz clubs and other entertainment venues that catered to the illegal demand for alcohol became “alluring because of their illegality” (138). According to Davarian Baldwin, the recognized transference of Levee-based vice to the Black Belt “physically marked and conceptually mapped deviance as a ‘Negro’ trait” (126). For mainstream Americans visiting the South Side, illicit drinking “added the charm of actual law-breaking to the primitive tang of […] the forbidden” via the controversial racial mixing prevalent in Chicago’s black-and-tans (Cannon 66). By offering “hot music, live entertainment, and bootleg liquor,” these jazz clubs allowed white Americans to seek “excitement intensified by racial, sexual, and underworld connections, enjoying new experiences and behaving in ways outside the normal realm of acceptable behavior” (Bryant 179). This “exciting sally across racial, class, and sometimes even sexual boundaries” became known as slumming (Bryant 169).

In many cases, the most conspicuous white men and women partaking of the forbidden experiences offered by Chicago’s South Side were young, often college-age or twenty-somethings. As a result, the perceived corruption of American youth by the combined forces of jazz and drink became a robust talking point, with countless mainstream newspaper and magazine articles citing World War I as the catalyst that created a generation shockingly “hard-

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Age gangster, Al Capone, was earning an estimated $100,000 a week, while the “Torrio-Capone operation ran a $70 million-a-year enterprise” (116-7).

boiled, cynical, smug, and ravenous for experience" (Fass 19). Many of these articles argued that the war "awakened the young to the sad realities of life, and the imminence of death turned [them] to pleasure-seeking," the moral and cultural confidence of the prewar Victorian code shattered to reveal "the sham idealism of their elders" (Fass 18). One columnist in the *Atlantic* went so far as to say that the old and young in America were "as far apart in point of view, code, and standard, as if they belonged to different races" (Fass 19).

To an extent, these traditionalist readings of World War I and its impact on the postwar generational landscape might have been accurate.[144] In the 1970s, Hoagy Carmichael recalled that the end of World War I coincided with a burgeoning desire in his own life to rebel against "the accepted, the proper, and the old" (Levine 14). In his words, jazz "articulated" that rebellion (ibid). For Carmichael and likeminded Americans, jazz was hailed as "an antidote to conformity, boredom, custom, tradition. Its beat both soothed and excited" (Nash 94). Even Hollywood favored the belief that American youth were hardened by the war, with films like 1933's *Made on Broadway*, in which Robert Montgomery's character runs a kind of "municipal speakeasy" while doling out publicity advice to the rich and powerful, stating that those who had come of age since the war lived by a "code that kicks any […] sentiment right square in the face."

For its most vehement critics, however, jazz was considered a pathological problem, its effects compared to the postwar epidemic of shell shock, wreaking "a vast amount of harm to young minds and bodies not yet developed" (Johnson, "Disease" 21-2, 23). Fear regarding the physical and mental effects of jazz sometimes led to extreme measures, as in the 1926 attempt of the Cincinnati Salvation Army to legally block construction of a movie theater next to their

[144] In *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s*, Paula Fass complicates the traditionalist reading of postwar rebellion among American youth, citing peer culture, especially, as a catalyst in the transition from prewar to "modern" youth culture.

Catherine Booth Home for Girls, claiming that “music emanating from the theatre would implant ‘jazz emotions’ in the babies born at the home” (Ogren 3). Some jazz critics even tried to ban the music outright, following the apparent success of Prohibition; in 1924, for instance, the mayor of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, attempted to ban jazz in the city, claiming it had “done more harm than drink ever did”[145] (Johnson, “Disease” 23).

As more white tourists and slumming parties descended on the South Side to indulge in the “self-conscious naughtiness” of bootleg liquor and African American jazz bands, pro-jazz critics began pursuing a new interpretation of the music as a primitivist expression of pre-modern freedom, emphasizing its presumed connections to the African jungle (Fass 324). White visitors to the South Side could “enjoy the ‘vitality’ and ‘spirit’ of the African safari in the city, as both a threat and balm that existed outside and away from their own over-industrialized ‘White’ civilization” (Baldwin 126). As part of the vitalizing foreignness of the South Side, primitivists argued that experiencing jazz could “release and rejuvenate buried emotions or instincts, thus liberating an inner, and perhaps more creative, person” (Ogren 146).

A Rite Of Passage

While the slumming parties and tourists might have been generally unaware of the “differences between good and less good bands,” the 1920s saw a burgeoning appreciation of hot – rather than novelty – jazz among young white musicians hearing African American bands on the South Side (Kenney 88). For these high school and college-age musicians, jazz became more than an open form of rebellion; it was zealously taken up as a kind of fraternal religion, conspicuously freeing them from the “dull and predictable lives prepared for them” in the

[145] In 1920, the city of Pasadena, California, went so far as to ban “dancing, or playing dance music of any kind, anywhere – including private homes – between the hours of ten at night and eight in the morning punishable with a five hundred dollar fine, six months in prison, or both” (Johnson, “Disease” 23-4).

“deadening middle-class world of crass commercialism” (Lowe 58; Kenney 91, 104). In pursuing their passion for jazz, these musicians were often distrusted by mainstream society, judged as “vulgarians beyond the moral as well as the musical pale” (Lowe 60). This was, in part, due to their generalized persona, which constituted a

> Single-mided interest in their music and their tendency to ignore or affront considerations that concerned traditionalists; […] their habit of living for kicks both in music and in unusual experiences; and […] their willingness to tolerate almost anything in an environment that did not interfere with playing or listening to jazz (Lowe 63).

Mainstream suspicions toward these white jazz musicians certainly involved, to some extent, their willingness to tolerate the interracial environment of the South Side in order to listen to and, when possible, sit in to play jazz. Even among the black-and-tan crowds, their presence was not always initially welcomed. This was partly due to the availability of live black music to white musicians at a time when African Americans were not welcome in “the Loop hotels and clubs in order to study the latest musical effects being produced there” (Kenney 103). Stories abound of white musicians being delayed by black-and-tan doormen before being allowed to enter clubs, often involving comments from these doormen relating their presence to the need for “music lessons” from the African American musicians playing inside (ibid). Sometimes, too, their “heedless preoccupation” with the onstage jazz performance led them to:

> […] literally [muscle] their way through throngs of black dancers to get near the bandstands. Once they were there, they would hog that area until just before dawn (Kenney 104).

While the obsessive behavior of these young, white musicians sometimes put them at odds with both mainstream American society and the African Americans visiting or working at South Side black-and-tans, they tended to understand their movement into these venues as “a rite of passage” in their spiritualized quest for jazz (Leonard 103).

Beiderbecke

This single-minded, pseudo-spiritual devotion to jazz was, for many white jazz musicians in the 1920s, embodied in the life and work of cornetist Bix Beiderbecke. Often acknowledged as the "central cult figure of the Jazz Age," Beiderbecke is supposed to have discovered jazz at the end of World War I when his older brother, Charles, returning from military service in Louisville, Kentucky, spent some of his discharge allowance on a Columbia gramophone and a handful of records, including the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recordings of "Tiger Rag" and "Skeleton Jangle" (Sudhalter and Evans 35). Shortly thereafter, in August, 1919, Beiderbecke's jazz education was purportedly furthered by the arrival of the Streckfus riverboat *Capitol* in the Mississippi River port of his hometown, Davenport, Iowa. Performing onboard the *Capitol* was aforementioned Fate Marable and his New Orleans orchestra, which included a young Louis Armstrong (Sudhalter and Evans 39). Although often judged to be apocryphal, Armstrong later recalled meeting Beiderbecke that summer, stating that Bix would "come down to hear the bands, and then go home and practice what he heard. He and I became friends the first time we met – he was the type of youngster I admired all the way" (ibid).

Beiderbecke was exposed to more jazz while enrolled as a student at Lake Forest Academy, a preparatory school only 35 miles from the jazz clubs of Chicago's South Side, from which he would often sneak away after lights out; this tendency, in fact, was responsible for his eventual expulsion from Lake Forest (Kenney 101). As his talent developed, Beiderbecke's cornet solos were enshrined by fellow musicians, who considered them the equal or better of African American players; as Allen Lowe describes, Beiderbecke's playing was seen as an unprecedented assimilation of "characteristically white and black ways of playing jazz" (88). Chicago musicians, such as Eddie Condon, idolized both his playing and his personality:

> Without effort he personified jazz; by natural selection he devoted himself to the outstanding characteristics of the music he loved. He was obsessed with it […] he drove away all other things – food, sleep, women, ambition, vanity, desire (Leonard 66).

Beiderbecke's piano compositions, most notably "In a Mist," also joined the jazz aesthetic to the impressionist modernism of composers like Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy, helping instill the common perception that his musical experimentation formed part of a mythical search for some hitherto unimaginable jazz style. Louis Armstrong was one of many who furthered the notion that Beiderbecke was constantly striving for something greater than he could produce: "No matter how good the solo was that he played, he wasn't very much satisfied with it. He never seemed satisfied with his efforts; this was true in later years, too, even while he was driving all the cats wild" (Sudhalter and Evans 39). For many white musicians, this trait became part of a larger romanticizing of Bix Beiderbecke that fed the spiritualized fervor of white jazz musicians emerging from Chicago; as Paul Whiteman put it, his "continual searching for some sort of ultimate created an almost mystic halo about him" (Leonard 67).

Beiderbecke's unique talent was reportedly recognized outside of the jazz world, as well. Considered a hometown musical prodigy by the age of seven, when he merited a feature article in the Davenport *Democrat* as the "BOY MUSICAL WONDER," Beiderbecke never learned to read music (Sudhalter and Evans 27). While performing in St. Louis, Missouri, as part of Frank Trumbauer's Orchestra in late-1925 and early-1926, Beiderbecke apparently approached Joseph Gustat requesting music lessons in "reading and composition" (Douglas 430). Gustat was affiliated with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and headed the Gustat Institute of Music (Sudhalter and Evans 151). After hearing Beiderbecke play, he refused to provide lessons,

arguing that Bix was “already following ‘his own path’ and more conventional musical knowledge might deter, not aid him in his quest” (Douglas 430).

Despite his occasional attempts to gain musical literacy throughout his brief career, historian Ann Douglas construes Beiderbecke’s lack of technical skill as a refusal of such knowledge, suggesting his attitude encapsulates the mindset of “scores of white jazz men” who aspired to “a kind of downward mobility” through lack of musical knowledge:

> He was trying to diseducate himself from his class and race as a self-protective measure. If he closed off the safe and conventional way to success and slammed the door behind him, if he didn’t acquire the skills associated with his social status, surely that status could never reclaim him; he’d be forced to continue in a life of high risk, whatever the temptations to turn back (431)

While the earliest white jazz musicians, such as members of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, did attempt to hide any technical skill as a way to convey a natural musical talent to match the presumed naturalness of the African American musician, Beiderbecke’s trajectory does not match that mould. Continuously, Bix has been read as a cipher for white musicians responding to hot jazz in the 1920s, still, as Eddie Condon claimed, personifying a fragment of the jazz narrative in his generation. Although some interpretations may not hold together, Beiderbecke helps draw attention to the complex sociocultural positioning of white musicians pursuing hot jazz – neither fully at home in the African American jazz community nor welcomed by mainstream, traditionalist America.

Nigh By Night It Gets Tougher

Far less complex than the positioning of white musicians is the sociocultural positioning of white tourists in African American neighborhoods. As South Side clubs became a Prohibition-era mecca among white men and women interested in testing – or breaking – society’s moral and social limits, ownership became more lucrative, causing gangsters like Al Capone to “tighten

their grip on the Stroll" (Kenney 150). African American entrepreneurs were urged to "get out of the cabaret business" as many South Side clubs were bought by gangland syndicates (Vincent 51; Kenney 150-1). The changing ownership of these clubs led to a "loss of [African American] community control" that ushered in "well capitalized commercial interests" motivated more by money than racial assertiveness (Vincent 52). By 1926, *Variety* called the Chicago nightclub business "a slowly sinking trade" (Kenney 148).

The press hastened the demise of Chicago's clubs, publishing safety warnings to potential white visitors. *Variety* wrote that several South Side black-and-tans were now "too rough even for those seeking high-power […] thrills" (Kenney 149). Similar warnings included a November, 1925, notice regarding the Plantation Café – owned by Capone – stating that:

> This black and tan resort in the heart of the colored [area] once catered to vast numbers of whites, who were the main support of the place. It has recently become inhabited with undesirable characters whose actions have driven off practically all the white trade this café once enjoyed. White people are now given no protection when entering this café (Vincent 53).

Musicians, too, were "constantly aware […] that violence in the mob-dominated clubs could break out at any moment" (Ostransky 103). For many, by this time there was "no choice but to work for the gangsters" if they worked in Chicago; according to pianist Jess Stacy, playing "the North Side [meant] you worked for Bugs Moran, and if you worked on the South Side, it was for Al Capone" (ibid). As Chicago's legendary gang warfare intensified in the latter-half of the decade, "competition over 'turf' made the cabaret scene unstable" (Vincent 53). King Oliver, who "started a jazz exodus from Chicago" when he left the city in April, 1927, later recalled that nightclub "bombings and mysterious fires […] were [eventually] so frequent and commonplace that they seldom merited mention in the press" (Vincent 53-4).

Alongside gangland bombings and violence, numerous South Side jazz clubs were closed down in 1927 and 1928 due to what were dubbed the "hip" rulings (Kenney 151). Beginning with the December, 1926, decision of federal judge Adam C. Cliffe, clubs that provided "set-ups of glasses, ice, water, and ginger ale to anyone who carried liquor onto the premises in a 'hip flask'" were now guilty of aiding and abetting alcohol consumption in violation of the Volstead Act (ibid). Government agents raided and padlocked clubs across the South Side, as well as mainstream clubs on the Loop (Kenney 151-2). As Kenney relates, talk of Chicago's jazz clubs began to appear in the past tense:

> Chicago was once the hottest café town in the United States, famous for sizzling music, torrid night life, a great little spot for the great little guys. But that's history now. Night by night it gets tougher for the cabarets (152).

Take Me Some Place Low

Whether lauded or lamented, by the mid-1920s jazz was well-established as a national "state of mind, [and] emblem of the insurgent Young Generation" (qtd. in Koenig 217). As a piece in the *New York Times Book Review & Magazine* put it:

> […] the great god Jazz spread over our fair land – until the very electric pianos bowed their allegiance. Every dance hall in Harlem had its whining saxophone, and every telephone operator in South Bend was doing the shimmy (ibid).

Although jazz could now be heard across the country – whether via live performance, phonograph records, or radio broadcasts – the impetus of jazz culture had shifted with the slow demoralization of Chicago's South Side; by the mid-1920s, it was the New York City neighborhood of Harlem that was "being advertised as the 'Nightclub Capital of the World'" (Douglas 74).

Of course, Harlem was significant as more than a nightclub capital; surpassing the temporary entrepreneurial inroads of cultural and commercial ownership made by African Americans on Chicago's South Side, Harlem became the center of a recognized renaissance in African American art and literature (Ogren 116). However, unlike South Side jazz clubs that, at least initially, operated under community-based African American ownership, Harlem's most lucrative nightclubs were always in the hands of outside owners, often individuals with ties to the underworld[146] (Ostransky 179). As in Chicago, the fashion for white slumming parties – heightened by both Prohibition and the concept of primitivism – made the Harlem neighborhood "New York's underworld entrepôt" (Charyn 58). Although gang-related violence occurred in relation to jazz venues like the Cotton Club, owned by Owen Madden (also known as Owney the Killer), this violence never drove business away as it did in Chicago[147] (Ostransky 179). Similarly, government raids seeking illicit alcohol on the premises of these clubs were often tame affairs, with "tabloid stories and pictures of clubs and their inhabitants during and after raids [making] club owners as well-known as movie stars" (Ostransky 175).

Harlem jazz clubs differed from those of the South Side in another very significant way; in Harlem, the best black-and-tans – venues like the Cotton Club – catered to a strictly white audience. Where not explicitly restricted from the audience of a club, the high price of admission often made it impossible for African Americans to afford entrance; Connie's Inn, for example, charged a door fee of $15 in 1929, equivalent to more than $100 in today's terms (Vincent 52). At the Cotton Club, African Americans were only admitted as guests if they were celebrities and,

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[146] Less significant nightclubs in Harlem were sometimes owned by community insiders, but Ostransky points out that these insiders were often still tied to the "fringes of the underworld" (179-80).

[147] Ostransky describes an incident in which competition between the Cotton Club and the Plantation Club led to the destruction of the Plantation Club interior by Cotton Club "friends," as well as the murder of co-owners from both clubs (179).

even then, they were "seated at a back table"[148] (Leonard 71). By catering almost exclusively to the white audience, Harlem became the site of a racial "fantasy land" that played upon notions of primitivism, delineating the space as the "apotheosis of slumming" (Erenberg, *Steppin'* 256). Harlem was, in the words of one mainstream newspaper in 1927, "[t]he jungle […] creeping up among the skyscrapers" (Corbould 859).

The impulse drawing many white Americans to Harlem's nightclubs was recalled in the 1933 novel, *The Big Money*, by John Dos Passos. In it, he describes a slumming trip to Harlem made by a white couple at the end of an already-long night of carousing:

> When they were alone and Dick was just starting to make love to Pat she turned to him and said, "Oh, Dick, do take me some place low … nobody'll ever take me any place really low." […] "I think you're mean. This isn't any place to propose to a girl. Imagine remembering all your life that you'd got engaged in Harlem….I want to see life" (412).

The expectation that one would see life in the black-and-tan clubs of Harlem was commonly expressed: "white visitors felt they were experiencing real life, hotter music, hotter dancing, life lived at its quickest" (Erenberg, *Steppin'* 257). Beyond the thrill-seeking aspect of visiting Harlem at night, the transient camaraderie of voyeuristically gathering in some place "really low" might have provided a space where "whites of all ethnic backgrounds were white and hence American" when juxtaposed against the primitive African Americans working and performing in the clubs (ibid). Such a sentiment would have created yet another stark contrast between the "fantasy land" of Harlem and the tensions of mainstream postwar American society, still

[148] Ada "Bricktop" Smith related a similar situation at Barron Wilkin's Exclusive Club, where "only light-skinned Negroes could get in, unless you happened to be someone special […]" (Tucker 88). She went on to describe how individuals like "Al Jolson, and a chorus girl named Lucille LeSueur who would later be known as Joan Crawford" hung out there, remembering how "[e]very night the limousines pulled up to the corner of Seventh Avenue and 134th Street, and the rich whites would get out, all dolled up in their furs and jewelry" (ibid).

exhibiting prejudice against ethnic whites, such as Irish Americans, and questioning the patriotic Americanism of individuals.

There were white visitors to Harlem that attempted to look beyond the jungle-themed extravaganzas like that remembered by Marshall Stearns:

> […] a light-skinned and magnificently muscled Negro burst through a papier-mâché jungle onto the dance floor clad in an aviator's helmet, goggles, and shorts. He had obviously "been forced down in darkest Africa," and in the center of the floor he came upon a "white" goddess clad in long tresses and being worshipped by a circle of cringing "blacks." Producing a bull whip from heaven knows where, the aviator rescued the blonde and they did an erotic dance. In the background, Bubber Miley, Tricky Sam Nanton, and other members of the [Duke] Ellington band growled, wheezed, and snorted obscenely (Leonard 71).

One such visitor was British-born Nancy Cunard, who disparaged white tourists who only saw the stage face of Harlem:

> As everywhere, the real people are in the street. I mean those young men on the corner, and the people all sitting on the steps throughout the breathless, leaden summer. I mean the young men in Pelham Park; the sports groups (and one sees many in their bright sweaters), the strength of a race, its beauty (Corbould 881).

However, in the main, white tourists in Harlem wanted to see the primitive spectacle promised to them without having to look beyond; Jimmy Durante summed up the situation:

> It isn't necessary to mix with colored people if you don't feel like it. You have your own party and keep to yourself. But it's worth seeing. How they step! (Jenkins 419).

For these men and women, Harlem was "packaged in primitive garb and accompanied by the beat of a tom-tom that they could enjoy for an evening. Few relished encountering real men and women on the street […]" (Corbould 872).

Jazz As Touchstone

Perhaps not surprisingly, many community leaders in Harlem would have applauded Cunard's criticism of the jazz extravaganzas permeating neighborhood nightclubs, arguing that the music and staging prevalent at venues like the Cotton Club threatened to reinforce "the negative stereotypes primitivism seemed to encourage" (Ogren 117). Others mirrored the "Old Settler" mentality of South Side elites, arguing that jazz accompanied "vice, crime, and migrant 'backwardness'" (Ogren 116). Supporting this line of thought was the concept of silence as "a strategy of racial 'uplift' that responded to the stereotype of blacks as noisy" (Corbould 865). In an era when jazz was often directly linked to noise, it is hardly surprising that those African Americans holding older, middle-class values would be antagonistic. However, their antagonism put them at odds with some of the very men and women on the street they spoke for (Drowne 931). Mirroring the reorientation of brash personal style previously mentioned in relation to Chicago's South Side, "making noise" in Harlem "was a way to build community through collective action that always had the potential to offend the sensibilities of white listeners" (Corbould 862).

Despite its potential, the response of community leaders to jazz was further complicated by its blatant connection to the illicit consumption of alcohol. Kathleen Drowne relates that many older leaders in Harlem believed a "strict enforcement" of Prohibition would strengthen the enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which "guaranteed civil and voting rights for African Americans" (931). At the same time, some of these leaders feared that any repeal of Prohibition could "initiate a domino effect," potentially destabilizing other amendments – even the Thirteenth (ibid). In some quarters, African Americans who undermined the enforcement of Prohibition were even referred to as "race traitors" (ibid). Given their

position as entertainers in the liquor-filled nightclubs of Harlem, this indictment could easily have referred to jazz musicians.

Although jazz was “generally devalued” by leaders within the Harlem Renaissance, it became a “touchstone” in their ongoing debates over black culture (Ogren 116-7). Among those community leaders who felt more favorably toward jazz, such as Alain Locke, the problems of jazz were laid at the door of “white-dominated commercial culture” (Ogren 125). This mindset was echoed by other important figures in the Harlem Renaissance. Zora Neale Hurston, for instance, wrote to Langston Hughes in 1928, stating: “It makes me sick to see how these cheap white folks are grabbing our stuff and ruining it” (Drowne 936).

Alternative Markets

For many in Harlem, this commercialization referred directly to the jazz spots whose décor and floorshows catered to the desires and expectations of the white crowd. Many residents of the neighborhood “regarded the tourist entertainment market with a degree of contempt,” partly due to the “discriminatory admission policies barring African American customers” from participating (Gaffney 375). For the everyday residents of Harlem, jazz was most often created and consumed in “semi-private, semi-public” spaces, such as buffet flats and rent parties (Corbould 861). Some speakeasies, the “low-down” cousin to cabarets and nightclubs, might cater to local African American residents, but these locations were rougher – in décor and decorum – than the upmarket venues catering to white audiences (Drowne 928). These musical outlets were “almost exclusively” attended by African Americans and constituted their primary opportunities for experiencing live jazz (Gaffney 376).

Interestingly, despite the displeasure felt by many Harlemites over their musical marginalization within their own neighborhood, Duke Ellington – whose orchestra was the house

band at the Cotton Club from 1927 to 1931 – became a neighborhood celebrity (Gaffney 370). This was partly due to his success in radio broadcasting. As Harvey Cohen relates, African Americans were typically "not heard or seen in the mass media, and had no presence on national radio before Ellington's shows […]" ("Marketing" 292). During his tenure at the Cotton Club, Ellington's band was provided a weekly hook-up to the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) that transmitted that evening's live performance into homes across the country (Cohen, "Marketing" 294, 298). These broadcasts provided the residents of Harlem with aural access to Ellington's live music, although still denying their physical access, which would otherwise have been almost impossible to gain. Ellington's "power on the airwaves, especially among African Americans," is captured in a flyer from 1931: "Now-a'days when you turn on the old Radio, the first thought is Duke Ellington. When you don't find Duke – 'Well' you just turn it off again" (Cohen, "Marketing" 298).

According to Nicholas Gaffney, Ellington's radio presence lies at the heart of his acceptance among the residents of Harlem because it involves his music in an alternative "black musical entertainment market" emerging from the rent parties and buffet flats popping up across the neighborhood (370-1). Rent parties, especially, "became the rage" among African Americans in Harlem; live music – typically a solo piano player or a trio consisting of piano, drums, and horn – was an integral aspect of these parties, with musicians likely "improvising on some variation of the popular black [j]azz by Ellington […] heard on the radio" (Gaffney 375). For Gaffney, these encounters with Ellington's music formed a basis by which his "relationship with black music consumers" was formed (371).

Ellington was not the only orchestra leader utilizing the radio as a means to foster alternative jazz markets. Mainstream appreciation of "sweet" jazz, which attempted to make the

music more respectable, was spearheaded in the 1920s by the success of bandleader Paul Whiteman, often referred to as the "King of Jazz" (Jenkins 421). Radio listeners interested in hearing what *Variety* columnist Abel Green described as "a lowdown style that quite defies passiveness on hearing it" dialed in to CBS on Monday nights for Duke Ellington (Jenkins 424). Listeners more interested in what critic Eleanor Clarage of the *Cleveland Plain-Dealer* praised as music with an "even flow" and "a decisive yet not too obtrusive rhythm" also dialed in to CBS, but on Tuesday nights, for Paul Whiteman (Rayno 152; DeLong 129).

Whiteman became involved in jazz during World War I when, just before enlisting in the army in 1918, he was surprised to discover that playing the "jazz fiddle" in San Francisco could earn him $90 per week, while playing in the city's symphony orchestra would only earn him $40 (DeLong 27, 30). In 1924, he caused a national sensation by presenting a jazz concert in the traditionalist stronghold of Aeolian Hall. It was here that George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* premiered. Whiteman's orchestra became the most successful of the decade, providing, in the words of *Chicago Defender* critic Dave Peyton, "beautiful melodies, garnished with eccentric figurations propelled by strict rhythm" that were less socially or musically challenging on the listener (Johnson, "Disease" 31).

The commercial success of sweet jazz performed by bands like Whiteman's nettled some musicians, black and white; Benny Goodman, for instance recalled his time as a freelance musician working around New York City in 1929:

> Musicians who played hot were pretty much of a clique by themselves. They hung around the same places, made the same spots after work, drank together and worked together whenever they had a chance. [….] None of us had much use for what was known then and probably always will be, as "commercial" musicians [….] The saddest thing, always, was a recognized hot man who went in for that sort of work because he made good dough and got steady work around

the studios (Ostransky 176-7).

Goodman's complaint against commercial musicians compliments the frustration voiced by the likes of Alain Locke and Zora Neale Hurston in Harlem as they contemplated the commercialization of their neighborhood and their culture.

After the 1920s, as the postwar struggles that gave rise to the jazz controversy in America began to lose their immediacy, both music and society moving on, sweet jazz eventually became a style to scorn. The style became so derided that Bix Beiderbecke, who spent his last years intermittently playing with Whiteman's orchestra before dying from pneumonia at the age of 28, was said by some to have died because "Paul Whiteman's commercial arrangements broke him down" (Leonard 67). While there is much to question in what Duke Ellington referred to as the "whitening" of jazz, the sweet style popularized by Whiteman represents another kind of alternative market in which a majority of mainstream Americans, falling somewhere between the devotees to hot jazz and the traditionalists attempting to ban jazz, could begin to approach the popular music at the heart of America's postwar identity crisis. Whiteman, himself, later enigmatically remarked: "I know as much about real jazz as F. Scott Fitzgerald did about the Jazz Age" (DeLong 68).

Chapter 4:

A New Mythology

"The best among them [U.S. soldiers] have been initiated by this war into an insight that neither books nor schools nor threescore years of civil life can give any man. And the pith of the result is this: they have been where only the elemental needs of men are real, where only the fundamental faiths and virtues matter, and they swiftly divine the essential from the accident. They have a quick instinct for what is genuine, for what rings true and really counts. Above all, they hate ineffectiveness and make-believe and unreal talk. And what they hate they have no patience with; they have learned to fight; they are not tolerant." – Harry Emerson Fosdick, "The Trenches and the Church at Home," p. 191.

"The Black Mask boys wrote it as it happened. Their fiction captured the cynicism, bitterness, disillusionment and anger of a country fighting to survive the evils of Prohibition and the economic hardships of the Depression. The stories in Black Mask were born of adversity, written to dramatize and delineate a nation in flux." – William Nolan, *The Black Mask Boys*, p. 13

"Before […] Hammett, the detective story was the domain of twitty aristos and brainy, eccentric puzzle-solvers. The writing was Victorian, the murders emotionally bloodless. The times demanded something new, something stronger. America in the 1920s was a tough, wised-up place, with its veterans of World War I trenches, its flappers and gangsters. The Volstead Act gave millions of upright but thirsty citizens their first unlawful experiences. Cynicism was in the air, crime in the headlines. Someone was bound to take mystery fiction out of the vicarage and the country home and drop it down on the turbulent mean streets, to give murder [in the words of Raymond Chandler] "back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse […]." – Lee Server, *Danger is My Business: An Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines*, p. 62.

The Aristocrat Of Magazines

In 1914, as war broke out in Europe and the Castles stormed New York's fashionable night spots alongside their musical collaborator, James Reese Europe, well-known critics H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan took over the editorship of a struggling magazine called *The Smart Set*, which had recently been sold to a creditor of its previous owner (Mullen 151; Manchester 93). *The Smart Set* began publication in 1900 as a society magazine for New York's elite, initially providing "the right combination of urbane irreverence, light entertainment, and upper class snobbery to capture the public imagination" (Earle 22-3). As such, the magazine attained its peak circulation in 1906, with an estimated 160,000 subscribers (Earle 23). In 1913, amid shrinking subscription rates, the editorship of the magazine passed into the hands of Willard Huntington Wright, who would later become famous as the author of Philo Vance mystery novels under the pseudonym S.S. Van Dine. Under Wright's editorship, the publication evolved from a declining, though still popular "Magazine of Cleverness" to one whose self-proclaimed "Prime Purpose Is to Provide Lively Entertainment for Minds That Are Not Primitive" (Manchester 91).

This lively entertainment included publishing such controversial authors as James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence for the first time in the United States, earning heightened scrutiny from censors (who could quickly suspend mailing privileges to the publication) while conversely arousing heightened interest among young American writers, whether "[o]n college campuses, in newspaper offices, [or] along the winding streets of Paris" (Manchester 92). Unfortunately, for Wright, the magazine's newfound aggressiveness was perhaps too far ahead of its established prewar readership; judged "too erudite" by subscribers and advertisers, further amounts of

significant funding for the publication began drying up and the future of *The Smart Set* in 1914 looked bleak (ibid).

Despite such inauspicious beginnings, by America's entry into the European war in 1917, editors Mencken and Nathan had found enough success among a small but dedicated readership to be able to christen *The Smart Set* the "Aristocrat of Magazines" (Mullen 151). Under their leadership, the publication would emerge as the ultimate "goal for aspiring writers" in the United States, with as yet undiscovered authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald beginning to publicly voice hopes of appearing within its pages (Riggio 227). As Sharon Hamilton summarized, *The Smart Set* was becoming "known for its ability to spot talent, its willingness to promote material that took risks in style and subject matter, and its appeal to American youth" (21). Despite their ever-increasing success among young writers, however, Mencken and Nathan were just as at odds with mainstream America as their editorial predecessor Wright had been; although they were "the darlings of the literati," their "reputations rest[ed] on years of no-holds-barred criticism in the pages of *The Smart Set* magazine, most of which decried the stagnant state of American culture and the arts"[149] (Earle 17-8).

As war in Europe brought mainstream Americans to the peak of nationalistic fervor, the increasing iconoclasm of *The Smart Set* was hardly a crowd pleaser. Furthermore, in the mounting anti-German hysteria of 1917, the vocal pro-German stance of Mencken and Nathan – who nurtured strong ties to their shared German ancestry – began impacting the financial stability of *The Smart Set*. As William Manchester relates, by that autumn the publication was "paying its editors no salary, appearing on poor paper that cost astronomically, and being kicked from pillar to post by government agencies" (130). The editorial offices inhabited by Mencken

[149] Mencken joined the staff of *The Smart Set* as a literature critic in 1908; Nathan joined as a drama critic in 1909 (Earle 23).

and Nathan in Manhattan were commandeered by the CPI, Creel's wartime propaganda agency, and issues of *The Smart Set* began being repeatedly delivered to the wrong locations by the United States Post Office (ibid).

Mencken, especially, feared becoming a target of wartime hysteria. Unlike Nathan, who lived in the bustle of New York City, Mencken remained a resident of his hometown in Maryland, where he had built a reputation for himself as the singularly outspoken "Antichrist of Baltimore culture" in his columns for the *Evening Sun* (Manchester 79). Here, more than anywhere else in the years before the United States officially took sides in World War I, Mencken presented readers with what many deemed an "arrogant and offensive" pro-German sentiment that ridiculed Woodrow Wilson and the English, all the while projecting the ultimate victory of German forces with editorial sign-offs such as "In Paris by Christmas!" (Manchester 111). In the pages of *The Smart Set*, too, he attacked mainstream Americans for their relationship to the European war, arguing that

> […] here at home we Americans go to church and call upon the Most High to stop the war forthwith – and then proceed to wring a bloody profit from the necessities of the contending nations. The best Christian among us is inevitably the most shameless hypocrite (qtd. in Nolte 198).

Although his public declaration of support for Germany was quieted after America became a belligerent in 1917, Mencken's much tamer articles in publications like the New York *Evening Mail* still generated hate mail full of anonymous "threats and denunciations," as well as Justice Department reports suggesting he was, among other things, in the pay of the Kaiser and intimate friends with enemy U-boat commanders who could be lurking off the shores of the East Coast (Manchester 129). Even as late as 1921, newspapermen in Arkansas were accusing Mencken of being "a former subject of the German Kaiser," repeatedly threatening to pursue

federal deportation proceedings against him (Friedlander 65-9). As internment camps filled with German Americans whose loyalties were suspected and German culture was banned across the country, Mencken and Nathan were forced to contribute heavily to *The Smart Set* in order to obtain enough content for each new issue, often under extravagantly American pseudonyms like Ethan Allen Lowell; after 1917, they resolutely avoided any mention of the war in the pages of their magazine (Riggio 231; Manchester 130-1). In private letters penned throughout the war, however, Mencken repeatedly stated the probability that “men with names […] like mine will be jailed before Sept[ember]” (Manchester 129).

The Louse Magazines

With a subscription rate of approximately 30,000, Mencken and Nathan realized that *The Smart Set* would never see a profit during the war years thanks, in part, to the combined mainstream fears of pro-German sentiment and the avant-garde content of the magazine so often at odds with mainstream tastes (Hamilton 26). Instead, they began to successfully subsidize their publication by creating a “sideline of new magazines” that would cost little to operate, but would generate enough profit to keep them in business (Manchester 131). Pulps – cheap to produce and increasingly popular among readers – proved to be the ideal publication type for their purposes; beginning in 1915 with *The Parisienne* – a “cynical and successful attempt to exploit the pro-French feeling of the time” – and continuing in 1916 with *Saucy Stories*, Mencken and Nathan were soon bringing in more than $4000 per month in revenue that could primarily be turned to resuscitating the coffers of *The Smart Set* (ibid). As Mencken later recalled:

> […] the pulp magazines were just then beginning to make money and we resolved to set one up. If the broken down hacks who were operating some of the most successful of them could get away with it, then why not such smart fellows as […] Nathan and me … even if our proposed pulp failed, the net loss would not be large, and if it made a hit with the morons it would not only pay

> well in itself, but also further reduce the overhead on *The Smart Set* (qtd. in Earle 18-9).

They called their pulp money-makers "louse magazines" and maintained a professional distance, keeping their names off of the masthead[150] (Mullen 151). David Earle explained the fastidious invisibility of Mencken and Nathan in the pages of their pulps, suggesting that "the last thing that the editors wanted anyone to know was that they, the high priests of American culture, were responsible for putting together a magazine that overtly pandered to popular taste" (18). *The Parisienne* was "full of stories about bohemian Paris, jazz, artist's models, and 'peppy' living," pandering to the popular taste for "anything French in America during the early days of World War I" (Earle 52, 59). *Saucy Stories*, which proved to be "even more popular and more of a moneymaker" than *The Parisienne*, typically featured "domestic romance, O'Henry-like stories, and the odd exotic adventure" (Earle 59). The high ratio of romantic fiction content, often penned by "writers of some prominence" and "generally glorifying the virtues and qualities" of womanhood, allowed pulps like *Saucy Stories* to "avoid incurring the displeasure of the authorities" (Goodstone 131). Despite the looming threat of censorship, however, both publications suggested some degree of salacious content, often through cover artwork and phrasing that acted like a code to potential buyers; *The Parisienne*, for example, "wreath[ed] its title page in cigarette smoke, titillatingly produced by a pair of crossed cigarettes" denoting risqué feminine behavior[151] (ibid).

While Mencken and Nathan made clear the cultural distinctions between the aristocratic *Smart Set* and the vernacular pulps that kept everything afloat, all of their publications played on

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[150] In the case of *The Parisienne*, Mencken and Nathan conducted all related correspondence under "a series of French-sounding *noms-de-plume*" (Earle 18).
[151] As Goodstone explains, "cigarette smoking by women in public was a sign of emancipation and 'fastness,' as drinking was to become a few years later" (131).

the growing interest in the scandalous behavior overtaking American society in the years during and just after World War I. On the cover of *The Smart Set*, for example, there always appeared the black-masked character of Pan, the mask being part of a "visual code, well recognized at the time, [which] indicated to readers that the magazine published slightly racy fiction" (Hamilton 34). By continuing to subsidize *The Smart Set* with pulp money, even after the war, Mencken and Nathan were able to risk printing "potentially offensive literature for a wide audience" at a level inconceivable by other commercial publications like *Vanity Fair*, which relied on subscription fees and advertisers to keep the presses turning[152] (Hamilton 39). As an early publishing venue for the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Smart Set* was able to capitalize on the alternately fascinating or disturbing glamour and self-conscious naughtiness of the Jazz Age by drawing readers from both postwar youth, "who were attracted to the magazine's risk-taking literary stance," as well as "an older generation of parents and pedants, who were alarmed by what their children were reading" (Hamilton 40).

The Black Mask

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, Mencken and Nathan cemented their precedence in the world of American letters, generating such fulsome praise as this September, 1919, statement from the *New York Globe*: "[…] with a certainty unmistakable [*The Smart Set*] is taking its place as the foremost progressive contribution to modern literature in the world" (Hamilton 24). However, money was still tight and, by 1920, it was deemed necessary to consider another pulp magazine venture in order to see *The Smart Set* through. This time, Mencken and Nathan decided to pursue a detective mystery magazine, perhaps "inspired by the

[152] John Dos Passos, aforementioned for his description of a slumming party to Harlem in *The Big Money*, also described the forwardness of American youth reading *The Smart Set* during these years; see Hamilton, "Mencken and Nathan's *Smart Set* and the Story behind Fitzgerald's Early Success," p. 31.

success that Street & Smith had achieved with *Detective Story*," which debuted in 1915 (Nolan, *Black Mask* 20). Conceived strictly as "an economic necessity," Mencken and Nathan threw together another pulp magazine and, for the title, referred back to the black-masked Pan that appeared on every cover of *The Smart Set*; in April, 1920, *The Black Mask* debuted on newsstands, featuring the logo of a "thin black pirate's mask with a dirk and flintlock pistol crossed behind it" (Nolan, *Black Mask* 19-20).

Unsurprisingly, given the level of interest Mencken and Nathan spared their newest publication, the early content of *The Black Mask* was somewhat erratic, with multiple genres finding a home in the pages of the new pulp. Mencken's disdain for the publication is evident in letters penned during this time; in one such complaint, he manages to vent his displeasure with *The Black Mask* and the President of the United States at the same time: "*The Black Mask* is a lousy magazine – all detective stories. I hear that Woodrow reads it. Reading [manuscripts] for it is a fearful job, but it has kept us alive during a very bad period" (qtd. in Goulart 24). For example, the second issue of *The Black Mask* traded on its inclusivity with an editorial titled "Five Magazines in One!" that stated:

> What we propose to do is to publish in every issue the best stories obtainable … of Adventure, the best Mystery and Detective Stories, the best Romances, the best Love stories, and the best of the Occult (qtd. in Nolan, *Black Mask* 20).

Pulp historian Robert Sampson describes *The Black Mask* as being "sterile" in its early years, existing

> […] without direction, without self-respect … What ailed *Mask* was the baleful influence of *The Smart Set*. The lesser magazine aped the attitudes of the greater …. *Mask* disdained its own fiction, smirked at reader tastes, and [was] haughtily aloof from the field in which it would [within a decade] stand pre-eminent (qtd. in Nolan, *Black Mask* 21-2).

The sterility of very early *Black Mask* stories mirrored, to an extent, the general state of American mystery fiction immediately following World War I. Prior to the war, writing in the wake of Arthur Conan Doyle's phenomenal success, American mystery writers had tried to recreate the élan of the Baker Street stories – superimposing the Victorian fog of London and the cerebral eccentricities of Holmes onto American places and faces, to varying degrees of credibility. As Howard Haycraft observed in 1941, although there were "'good' authors" publishing good American mystery stories, none of them:

> […] was doing work to compare with the exciting developments that were taking place in England. The American detective story stood still, exactly where it had been before the War (163).

The means by which American detective stories should attempt to compete with – or move beyond – the exciting developments being devised in postwar Britain by writers like Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers were hardly obvious in the 1920s. In July, 1930, writing in response to the death of Arthur Conan Doyle, *The New York Times* editorialized that the problem with American detective fiction was that it could never inhabit the ancient and aristocratic – and presumably, essential – settings available to English writers; therefore, the *Times* advised, American writers must "devote considerable effort to dimming the familiar American lights down to the proper ghostly flicker before proceeding with the murder" (Van Dover, *Making* 12-3). The editors, apparently, found it difficult to envision any truly successful detective story being set amidst the mean streets of the modern urban American landscape, preferring instead the bucolic isolation and titled nobility of the English country estate mystery:

> As a setting for murder, there is a rich quality about a Tudor mansion that is not to be had in a Long Island country home. A house standing in its own grounds in Surrey carries more shivery promise than a house standing in its own grounds in Westchester. And the English nobility obviously furnishes more great psycho-pathological facilities than our own absurdly healthy

millionaire class (qtd. in Van Dover, *Making* 13).

Certainly, in its early days, there was little to suggest that the humble pulp pages of *The Black Mask* would become the birthplace of a transformative American style of detective fiction (Server 62). Within just eight months, Mencken and Nathan sold their shares in the unwieldy pulp, handing full control over to the owner-publishers of *The Smart Set*, Eltinge F. "Pop" Warner and Eugene Crowe, for the alleged sum of $12,250[153] (Nolan, *Black Mask* 20). During the next two years, the magazine developed a healthy – if uninspiring – circulation level while continuing to publish an assortment of pulp genres (Nolan, *Black Mask* 21). It was not until December, 1922, under the new editorship of George W. Sutton, Jr., that the future significance of *The Black Mask* began to take shape; in an issue still promising the varied styles of "rugged Adventure, and real … Romance, rare Western yarns … weird, creepy mystery tales and the only convincing ghost stories to be found anywhere," the stories of "two authors destined to reshape the [detective] genre" were published (Nolan, *Black Mask* 22). One of these stories, titled "The False Burton Combs," was actually the second appearance by author Carroll John Daly in the pages of *The Black Mask*; the other, titled "The Road Home," represented the first published effort in the pulp by someone named Peter Collinson[154] (ibid).

[153] Nolan relates that "[s]ome reports have placed the sum at $100,000," which he dismisses out-of-hand as an "obviously overinflated figure" (*Boys* 20).
[154] Carroll John Daly first appeared in *The Black Mask* in October, 1922, with the story "Dolly" (Nolan, *Hammett* 44). Hammett's first pulp story, titled "Immortality," appeared in *10 Story Book* in November, 1922 (Nolan, *Hammett* 36).

The Pinkerton Operative

Peter Collinson was actually a pseudonym of Samuel Dashiell Hammett.[155] Like Mencken, Hammett's family settled in Baltimore, Maryland, and it was here, in the years preceding the outbreak of war in Europe, that Hammett struggled to establish himself in a productive line of work.[156] At the age of fourteen, he dropped out of the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute – the same high school from which Mencken successfully graduated in 1896 – and began several years of scrambling together a living through piecemeal work. (Layman 8) He later described his life during this time: "I was the unsatisfactory and unsatisfied employee of various railroads, stock brokers, machine manufacturers and canners by whom I was usually fired" (qtd. in Haining 96). In 1914, as Mencken and Nathan took up the editorship of *The Smart Set*, Hammett took up a new profession when he answered a local newspaper advertisement "inviting applications for operatives for the famous Pinkerton's National Detective Agency" (Haining 96). The Pinkerton agency initially hired Hammett as a clerk, but he was quickly promoted to an operative in 1915, earning twenty-one dollars per week (Johnson, *Hammett* 17).

Hammett's experience as a detective for the Pinkerton agency was transformative not only for himself, but for the American genre of hard-boiled detective fiction he would eventually help shape (Athanasourelis 57). The Pinkerton agency, previously mentioned in connection to the popular 19th century novels depicting the most famous cases of agency-founder Allan Pinkerton and his top operatives, began in 1852 in Chicago as an alternative to fledgling – and

[155] According to Peter Haining, Hammett's pseudonym of Peter Collinson was actually contemporary slang; if someone said "He's a Peter Collinson," they meant "He's a nobody" (98). See, also, Layman, pp. 37-8; Nolan, *Hammett*, p. 38. Interestingly, for the anti-Ku Klux Klan story "The Crusader," which appeared in *The Smart Set* in August, 1923, Hammett used the name of his infant daughter, Mary Jane Hammett (Panek, *Reading Early Hammett* p. 6).
[156] Hammett's family actually lived a mere six blocks north of H.L. Mencken, at 212 North Stricker Street (Layman 7).

sometimes corrupt – municipal policing (Panek, *Origins* 133). Despite presenting themselves as an alternative to corruption, Pinkerton agents were encouraged by their founder to do whatever was necessary to solve a case; Pinkerton "trained them himself, under his dictum: 'It is held by the agency that the ends, being for the accomplishment of justice, justify the means used'" (Nolan, *Hammett* 8). Still, in its heyday the Pinkerton agency gained national prominence for its role in dismantling some of the most high-profile criminal plots and organizations of the era:

> [Allan Pinkerton] and his agents saved President Lincoln from assassination when he first traveled to Washington, solved the Adams Express Company robbery, rooted out the Molly McGuires [sic], and chased down Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Indeed, the Pinkertons had a hand in a lot of the 19th century's most well-known criminal cases[157] (ibid).

With their easily recognized company logo, an unblinking eye accompanied by the phrase "We Never Sleep," and their heavy presence in both newspapers and popular dime novels, Pinkerton agents initially furthered mainstream American acceptance of the concept of private eyes, making the "private detective a household word at the turn of the twentieth century" (Panek, *Origins* 133-4).

The Baltimore branch office of the Pinkerton agency where Hammett reported for work was located in the Continental Building; it was here that Hammett learned the tools of his new trade from James Wright, assistant branch manager for the Baltimore region (Layman 11). According to Hammett biographer Richard Layman, Wright's training provided more than the street skills or "procedural principles" of a private investigator, instilling:

> […] a detective's code, an amalgam of Pinkerton's regulations, professional ethics, and rules for self-protection, which Hammett embraced enthusiastically and adhered to with an almost religious

[157] Pinkerton agency exploits were so famous that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle based the Sherlock Holmes story *The Valley of Fear* (1915) on their "campaign against the Molly Maguires" (Zumoff 80).

> devotion for the rest of his life. The code was pragmatic and unwritten; it provided an operative with an approach to his job that would allow him to do it well with as little physical and emotional risk as possible. Essentially, the code was built around three elements: anonymity, morality, and objectivity (11-2).

Wright also taught Hammett the necessary hands-on knowledge of a private detective. During the eight years he worked as a Pinkerton operative, Hammett became known throughout the agency as an "ace shadow man," taking cases across several states while unknowingly gathering material for his future career as a writer (Nolan, *Hammett* 11). Recalling the majority of his experience as a Pinkerton agent, Hammett later stated that "[d]etective work is often ridiculous;" for example, he recounted the time when he was shadowing a man who became lost in the country and Hammett "had to step forward and direct him back to the city" (Nolan, *Hammett* 10).

Not all detective work was ridiculous, however. At the time Hammett became an operative in 1915, the Pinkertons were "synonymous with anti-labor repression, based on some six decades of union-busting and strike-breaking" (Zumoff 79). In the summer of 1917, amid the initial turbulence of the United States officially engaging in World War I, Hammett claimed the Pinkerton agency sent him to Butte, Montana, as a strikebreaker (Nolan, *Hammett* 13-4). The strike was organized by the International Workers of the World (I.W.W.) against the Anaconda Copper Company and was spearheaded by Frank Little, a labor union organizer known as "the hobo agitator"[158] (Nolan, *Hammett* 14). According to reports, Little not only attempted to organize miners into the I.W.W., but used his position to speak out against the war America had

[158] In 1917, the *Atlantic Monthly* published a brief discussion of the I.W.W., describing the "membership in the West" as "consistently of one type and one which has had a uniform economic experience. It is made up of migratory workers currently called hobo labor. The terms 'hobo miner,' 'hobo lumberjack,' and 'blanket stiff' are familiar and necessary in accurate descriptions of Western labor conditions" (Parker 182).

just decided to join (Zumoff 81). Little's anti-war stance mirrored that of the I.W.W. as an organization, which was widely recognized for its "street-corner opposition" to the conflict (Parker 184). While more level-headed observers argued that the average American I.W.W. worker was "as far from being a scheming syndicalist […] as the imagination might conceive" and that his "proved sabotage activities in the West total up a few hop kiln burnings," the explicit anti-war alignment of the I.W.W. proved the final straw for many war-ready Americans already suspiciously anxious regarding the actions of a radicalized labor movement (Parker 182).

Hammett later claimed that, on arriving in Butte, he was approached by representatives of the Anaconda Copper Company offering him a "bonus" of five thousand dollars to kill Little (Johnson, *Hammett* 20). He rebuffed the offer, but shortly thereafter Frank Little and three other men were found "lynched at a railroad crossing" (Nolan, *Hammett* 14). Vigilantes, presumably in the pay of the copper company, were deemed responsible for the murders, although there was never any law enforcement investigation into the crime (Zumoff 81). Speaking days later, a lawyer for the Anaconda Copper Company had this to say about the murders:

> These Wobblies, snarling their blasphemies in filthy and profane language; they advocate disobedience of the law, insults to our flag, disregard of all property rights and destruction of the principles and institutions which are the safeguards of society. Why, Little, the man who was hanged in Butte, prefaced his seditious and treasonable speeches with the remark that he expected to be arrested for what he was going to say (qtd. in Johnson, *Hammett* 20).

According to biographer William Nolan, Hammett was "stunned and sickened" by the events surrounding the murder of Frank Little (*Hammett* 14). Long-seated anti-labor and anti-radical views had merged with escalating wartime hysteria, producing not only vigilante mob violence and murder, but the accompanying suggestion that such actions were sanctioned as necessary and noble by the war-induced threats and strains of the day (Murphy 63). Some

scholars and Hammett biographers, such as J.A. Zumoff and Richard Layman, challenge the veracity of Hammett's involvement in Butte, Montana, at the time of the Frank Little murder, but regardless of its credibility the incident has become central to most understandings of Hammett's professional and political evolution (Zumoff 81-3; Layman 13). According to Lillian Hellman, who began a life-long relationship with Hammett in the 1930s, the Butte incident was true and life-changing:

> Through the years he was to repeat that bribe offer so many times that I came to believe, knowing him now, that it was a kind of key to his life. He had given a man the right to think he would murder, and that fact that Frank Little was lynched with three other men in what was known as the Everest Massacre must have been, for Hammett, an abiding horror. I think I can date Hammett's belief that he was living in a corrupt society from Little's murder (qtd. in Zumoff 81).

Supporting the supposition that the events in Butte, Montana, profoundly impacted Hammett – regardless of whether he was personally involved or not – is the widespread acceptance that Butte and the events instigated by the Anaconda Copper Company served as the model for the corrupt western city of Personville – referred to by locals as Poisonville – in Hammett's first novel, *Red Harvest*.[159] As the purported fictional version of Hammett's experience in Butte, it is interesting to note that critics have likened *Red Harvest* to "the last word in atrocity, cynicism, and horror;" Nolan describes the tone of the novel as Hammett's outlet for "projecting a strong, personal viewpoint" consisting primarily of "an expression of moral outrage" (*Hammett* 77-8). For many critics, the protagonist of the novel, known as the Continental Op – a play on Hammett's years as a Pinkerton operative working out of the Continental Building in Baltimore – reveals a fear that the detective is no better than the criminal:

[159] See, for instance, Layman, pp. 88-90; Nolan, *Hammett*, pp. 75-6.

> […] the text reveals the cultural costs of his ethic of amoral detachment and instrumental rationality, linking this ethic to the increasing rationalization of economic and social life in the 1920s. By adhering to his seemingly rational code of self-interest, the Op emerges as violently out of control: a "blood-simple" vigilante who produces more violence than he prevents.[…] neither the law nor criminality is presented as a stable or morally defensible site of identification (Breu 57-8).

Sean McCann, in his work *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism*, makes this interpretation of the novel explicit:

> The Op is as violent, cruel, and self-interested as anyone in Personville […]; all that distinguishes him from the criminals he betrays and kills is his purely formal adherence to laws that have been stripped of any ethical content (114).

These interpretations of *Red Harvest* illustrate what John Cawelti outlined as a significant pattern in hard-boiled stories, which separates the style from its classical antecedents:

> […] we find the detective forced to define his own concept of morality and justice, frequently in conflict with the social authority of the police. Where the classical detective's role was to use his superior intellect and psychological insight to reveal the hidden guilt that the police seemed unable to discover, the hard-boiled detective metes out the just punishment that the law is too mechanical, unwieldy, or corrupt to achieve (*Adventure* 143).

Whether Hammett was approached with a bribe by the Anaconda Copper Company or not, the sanctioned vigilante violence behind the Frank Little murder – so common to the American homefront of World War I – seemingly caused him to question his own motivations and actions as a Pinkerton, while placing his real-life detective experience at odds with the aristocratic and bloodless puzzle-mysteries dominating popular detective fiction at the time, laying the foundations of Hammett's identification with the worldview of hard-boiled fiction.

The Army Sergeant

Despite his outrage at the events in Butte, Montana, Hammett stayed with the Pinkerton Detective Agency for another five years. He did, however, take time away to enlist during World War I, finding himself stationed at Camp Mead, Maryland, as a transport driver in the Motor Ambulance Company by July, 1918[160] (Layman 13). Although Hammett never made it to the frontlines in Europe, the war proved traumatic in two ways. First, Hammett claimed to have overturned an ambulance full of wounded men just returned from the front for medical treatment, further injuring several of them; he cited this event throughout his life as the reason behind his aversion to driving and is not known to have taken the wheel of any vehicle again after leaving his army post (Nolan, *Hammett* 15). Second, and more personally debilitating, in October Hammett succumbed to the Spanish Influenza epidemic that was ravaging the Western Front and United States training camps where, from "September through November 1918, influenza and pneumonia sickened 20% to 40% of U.S. Army and Navy personnel" (Byerly 82). The epidemic was responsible for killing "more American soldiers and sailors during the war than […] enemy weapons" (ibid).

Although repeatedly deemed well enough to return to active duty, Hammett spent the next several months in and out of the Camp Mead base hospital. On April 23, 1919 – five months after the Armistice – he was promoted to the rank of sergeant, but would be discharged one month later as a disabled war veteran (Layman 14-5). On May 29, Hammett's condition was

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[160] Of course, Hammett is not the only writer of his generation to have served as an ambulance driver during the war. Ernest Hemingway famously served as an ambulance driver in Italy as a volunteer for the American Red Cross. Interestingly, of all his highbrow or lowbrow contemporaries, Hammett's writing is most often compared to that of Hemingway, in large part due to the "stripped-down expressiveness" illustrative of both men's style (Cassuto, *Sentimentality* 41-2). For more on Hemingway in World War I, see, Putnam, "Hemingway on War and Its Aftermath," *Prologue* (2006), 38:1.

diagnosed as "untreatable; he had disabling tuberculosis, the doctors said, contracted in the line of duty" (Layman 14). Hammett's army diagnosis ignored – or was ignorant of – the fact that his mother, Annie Bond Dashiell Hammett, had long suffered from tuberculosis, meaning that he was exposed to the disease from an early age and might have already carried the latent infection prior to his enlistment (ibid). In any event, the army provided Hammett with a small disability pension of $7.50 per week, returning him as a very unwell young man to the world of private citizenry and, due to the constraints of his wallet, his prewar profession of private detection (Layman 15). Upon reapplying to the Pinkerton Detective Agency, Hammett was hired back as an operative making the significant sum of $105 per month (Nolan, *Hammett* 15).

However, by December Hammett's health had deteriorated to the point that hospitalization was again a necessity; his doctors declared him fifty percent disabled and "he was granted a pension of $40 per month" (Nolan, *Hammett* 15). In May, 1920, he transferred to the Pinkerton branch in Spokane, Washington, taking cases as far afield as San Diego, California (ibid). By November, he was again hospitalized – this time at Cushman Hospital in Tacoma, Washington – where he remained until February, 1921, when he was transferred to the army hospital at Camp Kearny, San Diego, under the medical assumption that "the milder California climate would be beneficial to [his] lung condition" (Nolan, *Hammett* 17, 19). Once discharged from Camp Kearny in the spring, Hammett moved to San Francisco where he continued to work as a Pinkerton operative and married Josephine "Jose" Anna Dolan, an army nurse he began an affair with while hospitalized in Tacoma; their first child was born in October[161] (Nolan,

[161] Although increasingly unwell, Hammett's caseload as a Pinkerton operative in San Francisco included such high profile cases as the Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle trial, which held the nation spellbound throughout 1921-1922. The trial charged Arbuckle, a silent film star, with raping a young woman, causing enough internal damage that the woman died four days later. Pinkerton

Hammett 20-1, 26). Despite continued efforts to make the job viable, it was slowly becoming apparent that the rigors of detective work were not compatible with the symptoms of tuberculosis. In February, 1922, with a wife and child and $40 per month in disability pay, Hammett resigned from the Pinkerton Detective Agency (Nolan, *Hammett* 31).

The Writer

When Hammett resigned from the Pinkertons, he was initially so ill that he rarely stayed out of bed for more than four hours a day and was advised by doctors to severely limit time with his newborn daughter for fear of exposing her to tuberculosis (Layman 27-8). When not job hunting or bedridden, he would spend his time at the local library where, according to biographer Diane Johnson, being "[u]neducated, he had no grounds for choosing this book over that. [So], [h]e chose them all, read everything, and when he struck something good, he knew it [...]" (*Hammett* 36). Taking advantage of a program offered by the newly-formed Veterans Bureau, Hammett enrolled in courses at Munson's Business College in San Francisco, focusing on stenography and writing and began considering work in advertising as a means of supporting his family without overly-straining his weak constitution (Layman 28). Shortly thereafter, he took a part-time position writing advertising copy for Samuels Jewelry, which had two stores in San Francisco[162] (Johnson, *Hammett* 38).

Advertising was undergoing a transformation in the years immediately following World War I. Shortly before the war, industry leaders in American advertising attempted to woo

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agents were hired by the defense to investigate key witnesses in the case (Nolan, *Hammett* 23-6). See, also, Johnson, *Hammett*, pp. 33-5.

[162] Johnson notes that the "actual dates of Hammett's employment at Samuels are in doubt" (*Hammett* n12, p. 308). Scholars commonly agree that in 1926, Hammett began working full-time as Samuels's advertising manager, at which point there were four stores (Nolan, *Hammett* 62-3). For selected examples of Hammett's advertising copy produced for Samuels Jewelry, see, Johnson, *Hammett*, pp. 38-40.

potential consumers by trumpeting a campaign for "truth in advertising" (Pope 5). In those same years, psychology had been gaining a foothold among American intellectuals interested in concepts like behaviorism or Freudianism (Nash 47-8). The advent of war drew together the concerns of advertising and psychology in the propaganda that saturated the landscape of every major nation involved, with truth "clearly subordinated to the attainment of ends" – particularly in the use of "atrocity propaganda" that expressed an overly-simplified glorification of allies and demonization of enemy combatants (Nash 50). Advertisers, especially, recognized favorable economic prospects in the fulfillment of their patriotic duty, as evidenced by headlines in *Printer's Ink*, the leading industry publication in the United States, which included such eager statements as "War Should Mean Big Opportunities for American Advertising" and "World Wars do not come every year" (Pope 6). Even executives at the Shredded Wheat Company touted the war as "the golden opportunity of the American business man – and hence the opportunity for the American advertiser" (ibid).

Wartime advertisers, such as the George Batten Agency, extended the concept of patriotic duty to the continuation of business as usual in ads that touted:

> The plain duty of the American who is not, should not or cannot be called to military service is – live your normal life: conduct your business as energetically as if we were at peace; take your profits, your comforts and your normal pleasures; make all the money you can with a clear conscience (qtd. in Pope 8).

Meanwhile, wartime propaganda agencies, like Creel's Committee on Public Information, sought out the talents of both advertisers and psychologists in their efforts to shape public opinion and raise the appropriate war will on both the Western Front and the home front.[163] Interestingly, a nephew of Sigmund Freud named Edward L. Bernays actually served with Creel's committee in

[163] The CPI created a distinct Division of Advertising in December, 1917 (Pope 19).

New York City, drafting and disseminating wartime propaganda on behalf of the United States government (Nash 51).

After the war, the lessons learned from utilizing psychologically-driven propaganda transferred to the realm of business, with psychology becoming "the key to the great age of advertising which World War I ushered into American life"[164] (ibid). George Creel published an account of the CPI, which he titled *How We Advertised America*, and men like Bernays, as well as professional psychologists like behaviorist John B. Watson, were hired into high-level positions by advertising firms, while the latest advertising copy demonstrated that "demand for a particular product could be created irrespective of its merits by associating it with emotion-laden symbols and appealing to deeply rooted human urges" (ibid). Beyond basic product promotion, postwar advertising tactics were put to use in "Americanization propaganda, in seeking public sympathy during strikes and other industrial conflicts, and in promoting corporate-controlled welfare measures" (Pope 16). According to industry insiders, however, postwar advertising saw its main task in the economic boom of the 1920s as "teaching rich people how to buy, and teaching poorer people what to buy"[165] (qtd. in Pope 16).

Although Hammett became involved in advertising at a propitious time and took to his boss, jewelry store owner Al Samuels, he began thinking of his writing as potentially good for

[164] For an in-depth discussion of American advertising in the 1920s, including the emergence of "sentimental psychology" in postwar ads, see Mayer, "'Taste It!' American Advertising, Ethnicity, and the Rhetoric of Nationhood in the 1920s," pp. 131-141.
[165] Advertising occupied a significant space in the primarily working class pulp magazines, promoting the attainment of a middle-class lifestyle through "correspondence courses, etiquette books, elocution lessons, and job training" (Smith, *Hard-Boiled* 58). According to William Nolan, the advertising featured in the earliest issues of *The Black Mask* "was often more engaging than the fiction" (*Black Mask* 22).

something more than crafting newspaper ads[166] (ibid). In the fall of 1922, his first piece of fiction – titled "The Parthian Shot" – was accepted for publication by Mencken and Nathan and appeared in *The Smart Set* that October (Layman 30). While pursuing publication in *The Smart Set* as an unknown author with no literary connections might have appeared overly ambitious, the aforementioned financial constraints of the magazine made it necessary for the editors to continually accept "new and unknown authors with something new and interesting to say and a fresh way of saying it"[167] (Layman 29). For Hammett, publication in *The Smart Set* meant more than the affirmation of his ambitions as a writer:

> […] self-educated, hardly aristocratic, a member of no set, much less the smart set – the choice of Mencken and Nathan's irreverent magazine for his first stories was more a matter of image making than anything else. He could point to his publication there and his correspondence with H.L. Mencken as proof to his family and friends on the East Coast, and even to his wife, that he was not without ability, that he was on the road to success, and that he was not a helpless invalid (Layman 29).

Publication in *The Smart Set* brought Hammett the first of several acceptances from magazine editors; between just October and December, 1922, five stories were published in four different magazines[168] (Layman 242-3).

After this initial success, Hammett's magazine publications continued to multiply in the following years (Panek, *Hammett* 6-7). Excluding *The Black Mask*, his stories appeared most

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[166] Hammett was not the only mystery writer in the 1920s who attempted to earn a living via advertising. In England, Dorothy Sayers briefly worked for S.H. Benson – the nation's largest advertising agency – using the experience a decade later as the setting in one of her Lord Peter Wimsey novels, *Murder Must Advertise* (1933). See, Heilbrun, "Sayers, Lord Peter and God," especially pp. 328-9.

[167] For a discussion of how other unknown authors appearing for the first time in *The Smart Set* made use of literary and social connections, see Hamilton, "Mencken and Nathan's 'Smart Set' and the Story behind Fitzgerald's Early Success," especially pp. 22-3.

[168] In 1922, Hammett appeared twice in *The Smart Set* and once in *10 Story Book*, *Brief Stories*, and *The Black Mask* (Layman 242-3). See, also, Panek, *Hammett* p.6.

frequently in the pages of *The Smart Set*, where he published from October, 1922, through October, 1923 (Panek, *Hammett* 5-6). His early stories tended toward the "cleverly ironic" style typical of a magazine like *The Smart Set* (Layman 31). In an attempt to appeal to the irreverent, self-consciously literary style of such a publication, Hammett

> […] broke into print as a satirist, as a wry observer of the follies of men, women, and society. Pretense, pomposity, arrogance, conceit and vanity wrapped in naïveté form the subject matter for his first publications. In them he ridiculed those traits across the social board – from the grocer who believes he can buy immortality and the barber who believes manliness is the guide to behavior, to aristocrats reveling in their illusions about their own greatness, to petty criminals who have neither the brains nor the discipline nor the courage to do anything right. […] The pattern that Hammett followed in his first year as a writer was to take what amounted to satiric vignettes conceived for *The Smart Set* and expand them into short stories published wherever he could publish them (Panek, *Hammett* 194).

In March, 1923, Hammett began utilizing his first-hand experiences as a Pinkerton operative to generate subject matter. In one of his last appearances in *The Smart Set*, he published a nonfiction article consisting of twenty-nine vignettes relating selected real-life experiences and accumulated opinions from a real-life Pinkerton operative; the piece was called "From the Memoirs of a Private Detective" and it constituted a significant shift in tone and content.[169] Whereas, before, Hammett wrote smart pieces in a clever tone, "Memoirs" is "notable for its candid realism and understated irony;" its content is "authoritative," while the tone is

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[169] Prior to "Memoirs," Hammett did publish one piece obliquely connected to the detective genre. "The Master Mind" appeared in the January, 1923, issue of *The Smart Set*, consisting of a two-column "tongue-in-cheek obituary" detailing the career of Waldron Honeywell, Hammett's earliest fictional detective (Panek, *Hammett* 10-1). According to the obit, Honeywell was "[…] famous for a treatise proving that 'the mysteries confronting Sherlock Holmes would have been susceptible to the routine methods of an ordinary policeman,' for frustrating a bomb plot at Versailles, finding the assassin of the emperor of Abyssinia and sundry other feats" (Johnson, *Hammett* 43).

"aloof and smart-alecky, anticipating the wisecracking quality of his later detective stories" (Layman 32). In one such vignette, Hammett used his experience as a Pinkerton to challenge the prevailing mode of puzzle mysteries in detective fiction, citing that

> [t]he chief difference between the exceptionally knotty problem confronting the detective of fiction and that facing the real detective is that in the former there is usually a paucity of clues, and in the latter altogether too many (qtd. in Johnson, *Hammett* 48).

Being both an advertising man – working for Samuels Jewelry – and a writer, Hammett quickly realized that being an ex-Pinkerton "created a literary persona" that was "as valuable for marketing his work as for providing material" (Zumoff 83-4). In an interview decades later, Hammett stated: "I found I could sell the [detective] stories easily when it became known that I had been a Pinkerton man. People thought my stuff was authentic" (Zumoff 84). This realization is perhaps why, despite his initial success in magazines like *The Smart Set*, Hammett's magazine publishing career after mid-1923 became more or less dedicated to the pulps, with their "paltry pay and lowbrow audience" (Layman 36).

Hard-boiled

Although Hammett recognized the value of his Pinkerton experience to the writing and publishing of his detective fiction, he found it difficult to settle on a defining character or style. As Layman notes, Hammett was so uncertain about the "writing experiments he was conducting in the pulps" that he initially published under pseudonyms, such as the previously mentioned Peter Collinson (37). Other critics have similarly suggested that Hammett's "eight years as a Pinkerton detective gave him his material, but finding the right way to use this experience was his ongoing concern" (qtd. in Zumoff 84). Some of his experiments proved to be short-lived,

such as detectives Robin Thin, a "prissy aesthete," and Alexander Rush, a "plug ugly"[170] (Panek, *Hammett* 46). For the pulp pieces in which experimental detectives like Thin or Rush are featured, the "singularity of the heroes is more prominent, more important, than the story" (ibid).

While experimenting in the pulps, Hammett also openly criticized aspects of the classical tradition of detective fiction, which continued to dominate the genre in both England and America. In a piece written for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, for example, he had this to say about the first Philo Vance mystery, *The Benson Murder Case*, which was published in 1926:

> This Philo Vance is in the Sherlock Holmes tradition and his conversational manner is that of a high-school girl who has been studying the foreign words and phrases in the back of her dictionary. He is a bore when he discusses art and philosophy, but when he switches to criminal psychology he is delightful. There is a theory that any one who talks enough on any subject must, if only by chance, finally say something not altogether incorrect. Vance disproves this theory: he manages always, and usually ridiculously, to be wrong (qtd. in Johnson, *Hammett* 62).

Philo Vance was the creation of S.S. Van Dine, the pseudonym of aforementioned ex-editor of *The Smart Set*, Willard Huntington Wright.[171] Although critics today most often refer to Vance in terms similar to those used by Erin Smith, whose pronouncement of him as a "dreary junior-varsity detective" follows the judgment of Raymond Chandler in his famous essay, "The Simple Art of Murder," his reputation in the 1920s was great enough to rival "King Tut as a popular

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[170] Robin Thin first appeared *The Black Mask* in January, 1926; Alexander Rush made his debut in the same pulp one month later, in February, 1926 (Panek, *Hammett* 47, 51).

[171] Wright claimed to publish the Vance stories under a pseudonym because, as he phrased it: "I rather feared ostracism if I boldly switched from esthetics and philologic research to fictional sleuthing, and so I hid behind an old family name [Van Dyne] and the Steam-Ship initials" (qtd. in Haycraft 165). In regard to Wright's *Smart Set* connections, it is interesting to note that his friendship with Mencken, founded on "mutual German sympathies," was ended during World War I due to Wright's involvement in a "spy scare" scandal in which he implicated numerous mutual friends as potential German spies. See, Manchester, pp. 132-3.

fad"[172] (*Hard-Boiled* 40; Chandler 9; Haycraft 165-6). Wright began the Vance novels after a six month stay in Paris at a rehabilitation clinic – brought on, in part, by an opium addiction – where he mostly read detective fiction; after such focused reading, he felt he could create a successful mystery because, as he phrased it: "I've studied the detective novel, and I understand its rules and techniques. I know its needs, and have learned its pitfalls" (qtd. in Nolan, *Hammett* 70).

Wright's creation, a "scholarly eccentric who carried out meticulously detailed investigations in a milieu of conspicuous consumption," quickly "dominated 'classic' American detective fiction" in the interwar period (Landrum 124). In fact, he was one of only three American writers approved by the previously mentioned *New York Times* editorial in 1930, which had cautioned mystery writers to dim down the lights of America[173] (Van Dover, *Making* 13). As an American protagonist in the classical (i.e., British) mystery tradition, Vance

> […] travels in a small universe of Manhattan millionaires, and while, probably to their distress (and certainly to his), neither he nor they would be mistaken for Englishmen, they are not representative Americans either. They – Vance and the victims – are more eccentric than unhealthy, and their eccentricities tend to be copied after English originals (Van Dover, *Making* 16).

J.K. Van Dover critiques the success of the Philo Vance novels in the 1920s, indicating that what Wright "offered [readers] was a small palette of special appeals: Vance's posturing as a

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[172] The Vance stories were popular enough to generate interest from Hollywood; several motion pictures were released based on Vance's published adventures, with the likes of William Powell (who would later play Hammett's detective Nick Charles in a series of *Thin Man* films) and Basil Rathbone (popular for his film portrayals of Sherlock Holmes) in the starring role (Haycraft 166).

[173] The other American writers mentioned in the *Times* editorial were Earl Derr Biggers and Mary Roberts Rinehart who, together, were considered to be writing "on a lower but still entirely competent level" when compared to their British counterparts (Van Dover, *Making* 13).

cosmopolitan übermensch," combined with "the practice of garnishing each murder case with esoteric contexts – quantum physics, Egyptology, pedigree dog-breeding" (*Making* 16).

In his Robin Thin stories, Hammett seems to be experimenting with aspects of the highbrow aestheticism made popular by detectives like Vance and his ilk; Thin, a "chatty" detective and undercover poet who works for his father's investigating agency, first appeared in "The Nails of Mr. Cayterer" by stating: "I was experiencing, as one will, difficulty with the eighth line of a rondeau when Papa's firm and not to be mistaken tread sounded outside my door"[174] (qtd. in Panek, *Hammett* 47). As a character, Robin is often presented in opposition to his father, who is portrayed (through the eyes of his narrator-son) as "loud" and "vulgar," particularly in his use of slang and his casual approach to social relationships; the resulting image of Robin is that of a "naïve, insecure young man" bound by "conventional and conservative" social standards. (Panek, *Hammett* 48-9) According to Leroy Panek, Hammett deliberately "[…] made the Robin Thin tales along the lines of conventional detective stories of the mid-1920s with collections of enigmatic clues and situations followed by a surprise ending" so that, by turning an "[obviously] naïve and prissy poet into the star detective," he could illustrate the "incongruity" of the classical tradition in detective fiction (Panek, *Hammett* 50-1).

Despite his ongoing experiments with the genre, Hammett typically abandoned detectives like Robin Thin fairly quickly.[175] However, one protagonist held his creative interest throughout most of the 1920s; as Panek states, having "tried out various forms, approaches, and styles, Hammett found his niche with the stories about the [Continental] Op and he made writing about the Op his principal occupation" (*Hammett* 66). Described as short, fat, and middle-aged, the

[174] This is not in any way meant to suggest that Robin Thin was directly modeled on Philo Vance; Thin made his debut in *The Black Mask* in January, 1926, but Vance did not debut until later that same year in the novel published by Scribner's.
[175] Thin, for instance, appeared in only two stories (Panek, *Hammett* 47).

anonymous Op first took shape in a story called "Arson Plus," published in October, 1923, in *The Black Mask* (Layman 243). The timing of his debut could not have been better. In that year, the style of *The Black Mask* was "just beginning to move from parlor detective stories to the taut, colloquial, ultra-masculine and violent hard-boiled school of fiction" (Earle 106). The trend originated with the aforementioned publication of Carroll John Daly's story, "The False Burton Combs," in 1922. Daly, universally recognized as the "father of the hard-boiled private eye," also initially favored an "anonymous, first-person narrator" who "is colloquial, wisecracking, [and] violent" (Nolan, *Black Mask Boys* 36; Server 62). However, these nameless characters were quickly superseded by Terry Mack – "lawless, fast-shooting, hard-talking, and illiterate" – who debuted in *The Black Mask* in "Three Gun Terry" in May, 1923, and Race Williams, Daly's most successful creation, who debuted in "Knights of the Open Palm" one month later[176] (Nolan, *Black Mask Boys* 36).

Race Williams was "an immediate sensation" in *The Black Mask*[177] (Server 62). Even women supposedly wrote the pulp's editors stating their enthusiasm for the character, as in this example: "Race appeals to me. If anything makes me tired it's the milk and water blood of the modern hero as depicted by writers who are scared to admit that blood is *red*"[178] (qtd. in Nolan,

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[176] Race Williams debuted in a special issue of *The Black Mask* dedicated to the Ku Klux Klan (as Lee Server stresses, "Daly's story was, at least, one of the *anti*-Klan entries") (62). The relationship of the KKK to 1920s society and hard-boiled fiction will be discussed later in this chapter.

[177] According to Server, Daly's popularity did not extend to his editors at *The Black Mask*: "Daly once recalled how his initial entry into the magazine only came about because the chief editor was on vacation." Furthermore, in response to the Williams stories, chief-editor George Sutton, Jr., reputedly told Daly: "I don't like these stories – but the readers do. I have never received so many letters about a single character before. Write them. I won't like them. But I'll buy them and print them" (65).

[178] The relationship between pulps like *The Black Mask* and women, who have often been discounted as readers or contributors to such overtly masculine publications, will be discussed later in this chapter. Recent works, such as David Earle's *Re-Covering Modernism: Pulps,*

Black Mask 39). Certainly, whatever their literary drawbacks, no reader could complain of watered down elements in a Race Williams story. Unlike classical detective fiction like the Philo Vance mysteries, with their “elaborate plot puzzles and logical explications,” Daly’s pulp stories were “crude, repetitive, illogical, and prone to exaggeration” (Server 65). He created protagonists who “were brutal and ignorant and frequently espoused the virtues of vigilantism,” promoting a “philosophy of shoot first and gather clues later;” as Lee Server states, Race Williams, especially, was:

> […] a blood relative of Natty Bumpo, Wyatt Earp, Deadeye Dick, and other rugged [frontier] individualist Americans of fact and fiction. This was a crucial aspect of the new style – the pulp detective story would henceforth emphasize action over mystery, and cases would be solved by fists and .45s, not ratiocination (ibid).

Intolerance And Authenticity

The mood of Daly’s stories mirrored the growing fascination with criminality in postwar America. Alongside the rise of Prohibition-fueled gang wars, epitomized by events like the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre of 1929, Americans in the 1920s became mesmerized by a series of highly-sensationalized homicide trials that came to dominate “public attention […] in a way rivaled by no other category of public or private events except sports and the movies” (Brazil 163). High-profile trials, such as the aforementioned Fatty Arbuckle case, became so frequent and so popular that a 1927 piece in *Harper’s Magazine* could state: “A nationally famous trial for homicide is no longer a startling interruption […]. It has become an institution, as periodic in its public appearances and reappearances as the cycle of the seasons” (qtd. in Brazil 163).

Paperbacks, and the Prejudice of Form, provide significant evidence suggesting a greater relationship between women and pulps than previously recognized. See, for instance, pp. 78-83.

Opinions varied as to where blame should be placed for the perceived rise of violence in postwar America, with some arguing the problem lay in the nation's past – its frontier history, for instance – and others arguing the problem was due to a disconnect from that very past – through such trends as immigration and urbanization[179] (Brazil 180). However, many echoed the sentiment expressed by John Gillen in his 1926 work, *Criminology and Penology*, suggesting that, whether blame could be agreed upon or not for the rise in "serious crime," the onset of "this great social problem" could definitively be traced to the social and moral rupture of World War I (qtd. in Brazil 179). Although "fought with [the] advanced techniques and technologies" illustrative of the prewar faith in science and progress, the war ultimately "called into question the ability of [advanced countries] to rationally order the world" (Zumoff 87). As one observer put it, "Our old security is gone. […] It has taken American invention to destroy the mythology of American history […]" (Giddings 177).

In the war's aftermath, anxieties that had fostered homefront vigilance societies like the American Protective League (APL) and sanctioned the curtailment of civil liberties – most notably through the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 – were sustained by such developments as the Red Scare and increased labor unrest. As wartime societies like the APL faded from the national stage, other organizations like the American Legion and the Ku Klux Klan rose to prominence.[180] Whether participating in Americanization activities or more covertly nefarious deeds, the actions of these societies were prompted by the conviction that

[179] Brazil notes that many Americans also blamed "popular entertainments," including "cheap fiction" – i.e., dime novels and pulps – for the increased frequency and brutality of serious crime (179).
[180] Sean McCann offers an excellent analysis of the relationship between the Ku Klux Klan and the early hard-boiled pulp fiction of Daly and Hammett, arguing that both communities recognize the same problems in postwar society, but ultimately articulate divergent (though, sometimes, ambiguous) solutions to those problems (39-86).

America was still under threat; they maintained the crusading zeal of the war by advocating the belief that "aiding the 'establishment'" equaled "crusading to save America" (67). This belief became "an integral part of the 1920s," with organizations as diverse as the American Library Association claiming to be a vital tool capable of "combating" the dual threats of Bolshevism and immigration:

> In these days of social and industrial unrest we [Americans] are beginning to open alarmed eyes at what we term the "menace of the unassimilated foreigner," and to voice growing concern over a problem which the public libraries of America have long been working quietly to solve. Out of the present welter is emerging a tardy appreciation of the value of the public library as a bridge by which the immigrant may pass from old world traditions and prejudices to American ideals (Murphy 61; qtd. in Young, "Aftermath" 203).

Continuing under the wartime refrain of patriotic duty, postwar societies like the KKK and the American Legion utilized militant, crusading rhetoric and vigilante actions to extend wartime fears that the nation was threatened by un-American elements, which must be rooted out of society. For many mainstream Americans, these organizations "earned a measure of state legitimacy by participating in nationally orchestrated antiradical purges," although there were certainly dissenting voices that labeled them, in the words of a 1927 report made by the American Civil Liberties Union, "active agenc[ies] of intolerance and repression in the country"[181] (Cohen, "Government" 32; Murphy 74). However, the mainstream appeal of 100 percent Americanism in the postwar environment was evidenced by the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which instituted severe immigration restrictions through a national

[181] For more on how the concept of patriotic duty was utilized by these organizations, see Murphy, "Sources and Nature of Intolerance in the 1920s," especially pp. 66-70.

origins quota meant to ensure “the ‘right kind’ and ‘quantity’ of immigrant to maintain the ‘national equilibrium’” – i.e., White Anglo-Saxon Protestant control[182] (Allerfeldt 20).

Amid these “waves of public intolerance” and sensationalized criminality, life in postwar America held the looming threat of insecurity and upheaval – whether social, political, economic, or cultural – under its “surface prosperity and supposed gaiety and exuberance” (Murphy 61). Government corruption, including the infamous Teapot Dome scandal of Warren Harding’s administration, encouraged the cynicism of the era by further evincing the need for individual vigilance; not even Uncle Sam could be trusted.[183] This lack of support was made abundantly clear to returning veterans who were repeatedly denied benefits as a matter of routine policy, as demonstrated in the 1920 *New York Evening Post* exposé on the so-called Hard-Boiled Order, which “provided strict instructions to the vocational guidance counselors [of the New York Board of Vocational Education (NYBVE)] who evaluated [disabled] veterans’ requests to be trained for specific occupations”:

> The organs used in approving cases are the eyes and the brain. The ears and the heart do not function. Be hard-boiled…Put cotton in your ears and lock the door. If you are naturally sympathetic, work nights when nobody is there (qtd. in Gelber 162).

In light of such unfair practices, many veterans began to view the government as the enemy. In New York, they “nicknamed the experience of visiting the NYBVE’s midtown Manhattan office

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[182] For an excellent overview of how World War I impacted immigration legislation and public sentiment toward the immigrant, see Ngai, “Nationalism, Immigration Control, and the Ethnoracial Remapping of America in the 1920s,” pp. 11-15.

[183] Hard-boiled fiction typically mirrored the perceived need for individual vigilance; in many stories, “[s]elf-reliance becomes an essential defense mechanism, an adjunct to toughness” (Hamilton 138). For a brief discussion of corruption in the Harding administration, including Teapot Dome, see Leuchtenburg, pp. 89-95.

as ‘The Battle of Fifth Avenue,’” sometimes referencing such visits simply as “going to war”[184] (ibid).

For many pulp readers, the hard-boiled style of characters like Race Williams offered a more appealing fantasy than the milk and water fictions of the classical detective, promising, in the words of a *Black Mask* editorial from 1924, to “fulfill that secret desire for an exciting life! Satisfy your craving for thrills! Let Race Williams and Terry Mack kill your enemies for you!” (qtd. in Nolan, *Black Mask* 36). The developing genre connected with readers, in part, by reflecting “the moral ambivalence of postwar America,” emphasizing “the need for personal codes of behavior in a time when civil and religious institutions were faltering” (Layman 43-4). Readers motivated by the tough and cynical climate of the postwar nation found that hard-boiled fiction:

> […] dealt with power, but more directly with the erosion of the ideals and expectations behind social facades. The underside of the illusion created for public consumption by businessmen, politicians, police, and bureaucrats could be revealed by the investigator […] (Landrum 11).

Ironically, despite his role as innovator of the hard-boiled style, Daly had absolutely no real-life experience with crime or criminals[185] (Server 62, 65). His somewhat staid existence is evident in an oft-repeated anecdote relating how he once tried to purchase a .45 automatic because he “felt he should know what one was like” for his stories, but was arrested on concealment charges before even making it home from the store; a friend later observed: “That was the end of [Daly’s] criminal research” (Nolan, *Black Mask* 38). Instead of first-hand experiences, he often

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[184] Hammett’s own relationship as a disabled veteran with the Veteran’s Bureau was extremely hostile; as Diane Johnson relates, he was engaged in “angry correspondence” with the Bureau from the 1920s until his death, viewing the agency as a center of “vindictive authority” (*Hammett* 40-2).

[185] Daly owned a movie theater in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and was said to be “afraid of cold weather and dentists” (Server 61).

relied on character traits like illiteracy, which he “invariably associated with toughness,” to demonstrate the authenticity of his hard-boiled protagonists (Nolan, *Black Mask* 36). Interestingly, this equation of illiteracy with authenticity echoes the trend among early white jazz musicians, such as the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, of claiming musical illiteracy as a form of jazz authenticity (Parsonage 135-6). Erle Stanley Gardner, creator of the Perry Mason mysteries, commented on the disparity between Daly’s existence and that of his fictional characters, suggesting he – like his pulp audience – “used Race Williams as a means of satisfying subconscious impulses which he knew could never be gratified in real life”[186] (qtd. in Nolan, *Black Mask* 37-8). According to Gardner, the father of the hard-boiled genre “wanted no part of the rough and tumble” (ibid).

However, with the arrival of Daly’s unapologetically rough protagonists, pulp readers could, for the first time, immerse themselves in a detective story set to the mood and tempo of a contemporary American scene devoid of millionaire sleuths and esoteric clues, a landscape described via the “new urban mythology of the hard-boiled American hero, with his streetwise language and tough and often dark vision of a corrupt society” (Deutsch xii). Unlike the characters and themes typical of classical detective fiction, hard-boiled pulps were promoted as expressing “the feelings and reactions of men and women who were surviving without benefit of inheritance. […] look[ing] at the political, economic, and social structure from the bottom up” (Landrum 11). Even when melodramatically exaggerated, the worldview expressed by Daly and his hard-boiled successors aligned more closely with the experience and expectations of the predominant – though, by no means, exclusive – audience of pulp detective fiction: working-

[186] Unlike Daly, Gardner’s most successful protagonist was his “fictional alter ego;” throughout his career, Gardner – a practicing lawyer – thought of himself as “a lawyer who wrote” and used his life experiences as material for his lawyer-detective character, Perry Mason (Nolan, *Black Mask* 94).

class males.[187] Erin Smith details, in *Hard-boiled: Working-Class Readers and Pulp Magazines*, how the nascent worldview of interwar hard-boiled fiction was geared toward working-class males and corroborated by pulp advertising, which "offered [readers] material solutions to the psychic needs articulated by the fiction" (44). Christopher Breu expands this concept, arguing that:

> What emerges from this complex set of relays between ad and story, fictional characters and "real-life" masculine ideals, then, is a fantasy of correspondence, in which fiction and everyday life are presented as inextricably bound together, meanings from one shaping and reformulating those from the other and vice versa. This fantasy of correspondence was encouraged by the pulp magazines themselves. Many of them featured columns or headers arguing that their stories were adapted from "real life" knowledge or situations (11).

As McCann relates:

> These were stories, the genre's writers and fans claimed, with a privileged purchase on "real life" and a fundamental antipathy to genteel fantasy. Against the "bunk" of oversophistication, they promised to deliver the stark truths of contemporary society – "ugly, vicious, sordid, and cruel" (40).

The Black Bird

If Daly's stories introduced the cruel realities of postwar America to detective fiction, it was Hammett – through the character of the Continental Op – who "brought depth of character, realism, and literary values" to the emergent genre (Nolan, *Black Mask* 75). The Op, said to be modeled on Hammett's Pinkerton mentor James Wright, was a watershed character in the development of hard-boiled detective fiction (Haining 98-9). His physique, regularly described

[187] For more on the connections between hard-boiled pulp fiction and the working-class see, Smith, *Hard-boiled: Working-Class Readers and Pulp Magazines*. See, also, McCann, *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism.* For more on the diversity of pulp readership see, Earle, *Re-Covering Modernism: Pulps, Paperbacks, and the Prejudice of Form*.

as short and fat, was consciously crafted in opposition to the "he-man hero familiar to readers of *The Black Mask* and other pulps," instead, more closely resembling "an average man – like the imagined readers" of the pulps themselves[188] (Panek, *Hammett* 109-10). Hammett's conception of the Op as an average man is further evidenced by the character description he provided to editors at *The Black Mask*, portraying his protagonist as:

> […] more or less of a type: the private detective who oftenest is successful: neither the derby-hatted and broad-toed blockhead of one school of fiction, nor the all-knowing, infallible genius of another. I've worked with several of him (qtd. in Server 67).

The Op's anonymity also suggests his prosaic status when compared to the reified identity of the classical detective whose genius is absolute; unlike such singular characters as Sherlock Holmes or Philo Vance, the Op "remains nameless throughout his career, known only by his job title" (Smith, *Hard-Boiled* 80). Having no access to the aristocratic context that cultivates such classical detective traits as bohemian eccentricities or arcane knowledge, and having "no wife, no children, no parents, no home to speak of, no fraternal organizations, [and] no emotional attachments," the Op's identity is solely defined by his work, allowing him to remain in the shadows – simply a man doing his job (ibid). Hammett described the Op's relationship to his work in words that evoke the trench soldiers of World War I:

> I see him as a […] man going forward day after day through mud and blood and death and deceit – as callous and brutal and cynical as necessary – towards a dim goal, with nothing to push or pull him towards it except he's been hired to reach it (qtd. in Layman 47).

By creating a detective whose activities align with the directives of a corporate entity, Hammett introduced "a substantially different kind of character" to the detective genre (Panek, *Probable Cause* 123). Unlike the aristocratic amateurs of the classical tradition or the "lone wolf

[188] Under the editorship of Joseph Shaw (1926-1936), *Black Mask* actually titled itself "The He-Man's Magazine" (Haut 112).

private eye" exemplified in the hard-boiled fiction of Daly, the Op is an employee of the Continental Detective Agency – "he is assigned to cases by his employer; he must go through channels; he must write up reports"[189] (Panek, *Probable Cause* 123; Panek, *Hammett* 79). In part, this correlation between the Op and his employer aided Hammett's appeal as a writer of hard-boiled detective fiction by leading readers to compare the fictional Continental to the well-known Pinkerton Detective Agency, which in turn highlighted Hammett's real-life credentials as an ex-Pinkerton operative (Panek, *Hammett* 72, 79). As Panek notes, Hammett often helped his readers make the connection between the Op's work and his own Pinkerton experiences by frequently "us[ing] his own voice during the early period […] [to] fit in the fact that he had been a real detective" (Panek, *Hammett* 81).

Hammett's Pinkerton experience "validated his stories about detectives and legitimized them for readers in a way that the stories of other writers could not be validated or made legitimate" (Panek, *Hammett* 81). *Black Mask* readers responded to the Op stories enthusiastically and "quickly elevated Hammett to a top position" among the pulps' writers (Nolan, *Black Mask* 77). As such, in early 1926, with a second child on the way and his own health again making it difficult to maintain a regular job, Hammett asked then-editor of *The Black Mask* Phil Cody for a raise and was refused; in response, Hammett quit[190] (Nolan,

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[189] As Smith rightly points out, even though the Op is defined by his work as an operative of the Continental Detective Agency, he is not portrayed as a submissive employee. Rather, he continually "resists corporate authority of all kinds, including the daily reports demanded by his boss in San Francisco" (*Hard-Boiled* 96). See, also, Moore, *Cracking* p. 76.

[190] According to Nolan, Hammett's impact on the publication numbers for the pulp was so great at this time, Erle Stanley Gardner offered to take a pay cut so that Hammett could receive his raise. He explained the seemingly generous offer by stating: "[…] *Black Mask* was my only regular market [for publishing pulp stories] and if it couldn't stay in business without Hammett I would suffer along with all the other writers." Although eagerly accepted by a panicked Cody, Gardner's offer was declined by owner Eltinge Warner (*Hammett* 61-2). Within months of

Hammett 61-2). It was not until the arrival of new editor Joseph "Cap" Shaw, in the summer of 1926, that Hammett found his way back to the publication (Nolan, *Hammett* 66).

Shaw would have a tremendous impact on *The Black Mask* during his ten year editorship; his very first action was to "streamline" the title to *Black Mask* (ibid). An ex-newspaperman and army captain (hence the "Cap" nickname), Shaw spent five years in Europe during and after World War I[191] (Server 68). He was fifty-two years old and a failed writer when he took over the editorship of *Black Mask*; astoundingly, he later "swore that until the day he walked into the Forty-fifth Street offices of the publication, he'd never even seen an issue" (Nolan, *Hammett* 66). In his role as editor, Shaw focused the efforts of his writers on developing style over other concerns, such as action, "shifting the emphasis of story values to those of character and the problems inherent in human behavior" (Brandon 706; Goodstone 88). Recognizing Hammett's potential as "the leader in [what] finally brought [*Black Mask*] its distinctive form," Shaw offered him "premium" pay for his stories and enthusiastically encouraged him to try for "greater depth and character expansion" in his Op stories[192] (Nolan, *Hammett* 67-8). Under such nurturing care, Hammett and the Op returned to *Black Mask* with a brand new story – "The Big Knockover" – in February, 1927 (ibid).

In line with his encouragement to attempt greater depth and character expansion, Shaw began suggesting Hammett think beyond the formatting constraints of pulps, arguing instead for

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Hammett leaving the pulp, circulation numbers "had dropped to 66,000," prompting Warner to replace Cody with a new editor (Nolan, *Black Mask* 24).

[191] According to various accounts, Shaw served during the war as a bayonet instructor (he had an Olympic medal in fencing) and, afterward, assisted with relief efforts in Czechoslovakia and Greece for a period of five years. Stories also claim he was "the only man in New York licensed to carry a sword cane" (Server 68). See, Brandon, "Back in the Old Black Mask," p. 707; Nolan, *Black Mask*, p. 25.

[192] Premium pay worked out to "four cents a word, rising to six cents later" (Nolan, *Hammett* 67).

"longer, more fully developed stories" in novel form that could "reach a large audience of book readers" (Nolan, *Hammett* 67-8). Given the "formidable" cultural stigma attached to pulps, which labelled pulp writers hacks and readers as "socially and economically marginal," there was little chance of breaking into the more respectable publishing field of novels (Smith, *Hard-Boiled* 23-6). However, Shaw's encouragement convinced Hammett to "set to work on a novel" that would be published serially in *Black Mask*; the first installment, "The Cleansing of Poisonville," appeared in November, 1927, with three more installments arriving between December of that year and February, 1928 (Johnson, *Hammett* 67, 69). That February, Hammett sent the four installments of his "Poisonville" story to the editorial department of Alfred A. Knopf (ibid). The success of his gamble was astounding. On its publication in February, 1929, under the Borzoi imprint of Knopf, the "hard-boiled novel was born complete in *Red Harvest*" (O'Brien 68). Hammett dedicated his retitled "Poisonville" novel: "To Joseph Thompson Shaw," as recognition and thanks for his encouragement (Layman 96).

Although not a best-seller, critics "generally recognized that *Red Harvest* was a different kind of mystery," with reviewers typically highlighting its distinctive language and action, as in this review from *The Bookman*:

> It is doubtful if even Ernest Hemingway has ever written more effective dialogue than may be found within the pages of this extraordinary tale of gunmen, gin and gangsters [….] [*Red Harvest* is] the liveliest detective story that has been published in a decade[193] (qtd. in Layman 96).

[193] In a 1931 editorial, titled "Take a Laugh," *Black Mask* derided the "'respectable' publishing establishment" for "'discovering' the type of detective story that *Black Mask* had been publishing for years: 'For all the "new type" stories, which on their appearance in book form, the critics are becoming so enthusiastic about, you read first in *Black Mask* [...] (Smith, *Hard-Boiled* 34).

Hammett followed the cross-over success of *Red Harvest* by producing three more serialized novels for *Black Mask*, all of which were published by Knopf as *The Dain Curse* (1929), *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), and *The Glass Key* (1931) (Layman 241, 245). Other *Black Mask* authors, such as Frederick Nebel and George Harmon Coxe, began making the transition to respectable publishing under the Borzoi imprint at Knopf (Smith, *Hard-Boiled* 35). However, their combined success did not "challenge the cultural devaluation of the pulps; it merely gave *Black Mask* honorary […] status" (Smith, *Hard-Boiled* 33). In fact, for some mainstream readers, the "appeal" of novels like *Red Harvest* was "clearly slumming – being a tourist on the wrong side of the cultural tracks, with all the forbidden pleasures such transgression promised" (Smith, *Hard-Boiled* 36). Just as white slumming parties toured Harlem or Chicago's South Side to consume African American jazz, mainstream "educated" readers consumed hard-boiled fiction because "it came out of worlds that did not include people like them" (ibid).

It was from this milieu that Hammett produced what would become "arguably America's greatest detective novel" – *The Maltese Falcon*[194] (Marling 126). The story, which centered around attempts to possess a purportedly priceless icon in the shape of a falcon, introduced a protagonist "with a face like Satan, a cynical wit and a method of cool, direct action, the like of which had never been seen before" (Haining 99). Unlike the anonymous Op, Sam Spade exemplified "the 'dream man' of the private detective," Hammett described him as, "idealized in the sense that he is what most of the private detectives I've worked with would *like* to have been" (McCann 117; qtd. in Haining 99). Like its protagonist, the novel, itself, was "a major

[194]*The Maltese Falcon* was originally published in *Black Mask* as "a five-part serial running from September 1929 to January 1930" (Penzler 105). It was "dramatically revised after serialization, with more than two thousand textual differences between the two versions" (ibid). In response to Knopf requests to edit out the "to-bed and the homosexual parts" of his novel, Hammett stated: "It seems to me the only thing that can be said against their use in a detective novel is that nobody has tried it yet. I'd like to try it" (qtd. in Johnson, *Hammett* 78).

departure" for Hammett (Penzler 105). Building on the hard-boiled mythology pioneered in *The Black Mask*, *The Maltese Falcon* distilled the worldview at the heart of hard-boiled fiction, elevating it to the status of literary art.[195] As Nolan put it, "in the very act of remaking its field [*The Maltese Falcon*] transcends it" (*Hammett* 87).

For Leonard Cassuto, *The Maltese Falcon* is "an elegiac study of trust," with Spade standing "as a response to a world where family support was no longer dependable, and where institutional support could not be relied upon in its stead" (*Sentimentality* 47, 63). Nolan echoes this reading of Spade, suggesting he is:

> […] a man caught up in an unstable universe of random violence, who survives by following a rigid self-imposed code of honor, who seeks to sift truth from lies, who trusts no one but himself (*Hammett* 91).

As these critiques suggest, unlike the classical detective who "restores a sense of wholeness, order, and moral confidence" by solving the crime presented to him, Spade is unable to provide "a scene of public reconciliation […] to the social contract" because he is part of the "disordered world" he is hired to put right (McCann 89, 117). As McCann argues, when Spade's partner, Miles Archer, turns up dead in a San Francisco alley near the beginning of the novel, Spade "is not brought to the scene as an eccentric genius; the police summon him as a potential suspect" (89). In the novel's conclusion, Spade's innocence is further complicated when it becomes apparent that his lover, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, is responsible for the murder of Archer (who Spade betrayed, prior to the murder, by having an affair with his wife); despite her pleas, he turns Brigid over to the police. In resolving the murder of his partner, whom Spade betrayed prior to his murder by having an affair with his wife, he must betray his lover. In the hard-boiled world

[195] *The Maltese Falcon* is the first hard-boiled novel "upon which literary history begins, though tentatively, to confer the status of 'literature'" (McGurl 713). See, also, McCann, p. 148; Earle, p. 110; Haycraft, p. 171.

of Hammett's novel, "little seems redemptive or consolatory" and the detective is as much at the mercy of events as anyone else (McCann 90).

Upon publication, critical praise for *The Maltese Falcon* was enthusiastically unrestrained.[196] Gilbert Seldes, writing in the New York *Graphic*, stated:

> The detectives of fiction have been knocked into a cocked hat – which is where most of them belong – by the appearance of Sam Spade in a book called The Maltese Falcon. It is the work of Dashiell Hammett; it is a novel and it is also a mystery story – the combination is so rare that probably not half a dozen good examples exist between The Moonstone and the present one. […] Spade himself is hard-boiled, immoral, with a free fist and a free tongue. After the high-minded detective heroes, with their effeminate manners, their artistic leanings, and their elaborate deductions, he is as startling as a real man in a show-window of dummies (qtd. in Johnson, *Hammett* 82).

Town & Country published this review, written by William Curtis, which particularly emphasized the cultural hurdles facing the novel:

> Until Mr. Hammett appeared […] no American writer has taken the detective novel seriously enough to do more than ape the outstanding characteristics of the British school. […] I think Mr. Hammett has something quite as definite to say, quite as decided an impetus to give the course of newness in the development of the American tongue, as any man now writing. Of course, he's gone about it the wrong way to attract respectful attention from the proper sources. He's never been to Paris, has never played around with the Little Review group. He has not been picked up by any of the fog-horn columnists. He's only a writer of murder mystery stories (qtd. in Johnson, *Hammett* 83; Layman 113).

Well-known critic Carl Van Vechten also took aim at these hurdles, proclaiming that Hammett's novel "rais[ed] the detective story to that plane to which Alexander Dumas raised the

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[196] Of course, not everyone responded to *The Maltese Falcon* with praise. When *The New Yorker* reprinted a Baltimore *Observer* letter containing a reader's negative review of the novel – "This […] is the same fellow that wrote *The Dain Curse* and there is something creeping up my back to tell me that it was punk, too, but I don't know what it is. Just something." – Hammett (via *The New Yorker)* simply replied, "Your undershirt?" (qtd. in Nolan, *Hammett* 118-9).

historical novel" (Nolan, *Hammett* 107). Even British reviewers were lavish in their praise, as evidenced in the *Times Literary Supplement* critique of *The Maltese Falcon* as "[…] not only probably the best detective story we have ever read, [but] an exceedingly well written novel" (ibid). Roughly one decade later, while examining the extant field of detective stories in America and Britain, Haycraft stated: "[…] should [Hammett] never write another detective story, it is already safe to say that no other author of modern times – certainly no other American – has so basically changed and influenced the form" (173). In effect, Hammett's Knopf publication of *The Maltese Falcon* set the postwar mythology of the hard-boiled detective on the world stage; through its unprecedented success, *The Maltese Falcon* gave "the American detective story a nationality of its own" (ibid).

Chapter 5:

Survival, Success, Succession

"Maybe we'd better just stick to gangster stories laid back in the Prohibition era, and forget things as they are." *Black Mask*, April 1942, qtd. in Goulart, p. 206.

Forward America, Nothing Can Stop U.S.

The first installment of Dashiell Hammett's serialized novel, *The Maltese Falcon*, appeared in the pages of *Black Mask* in September, 1929, just as the stock market began "a series of sharp falls followed by rallies," which presaged the worst economic collapse in the history of the nation (Cassuto 48; Derbyshire 67). When the stock market crash finally occurred in October – punctuated by two days of staggering losses on October 24th and 29th, known as Black Thursday and Black Tuesday, respectively – Americans were initially unwilling to acknowledge the extent of the damage; newspapers suggested that the worst had come and gone, that "the stock market falls now represented a marvelous buying opportunity" (Derbyshire 67-78). Billboards began appearing across the country, echoing the sentiment of the newspapers with slogans like "Forward America, Nothing Can Stop U.S." (Wecter 13). Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon counseled President Hoover to treat the crash as an ordinary, cyclical downturn, advising him to:

> […] liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate farmers, liquidate real estate. [The crash will] purge the rottenness out of the system. High costs of living and high living will come down. People will work harder, live a more moral life. Values will be adjusted, and enterprising people will pick up from less competent people (qtd. in Derbyshire 83-4).

In other words, Mellon believed that the social and moral chaos exaggerated by the experiences of World War I would be corrected by these economic straits – a full return to normalcy would finally be achieved.

However, despite the "momentum of the great bull market" that seemed to carry some individuals and businesses through the first year of the Depression, it was obvious, by 1931, that Americans were "facing something far more serious than a traditional downturn, namely a worldwide economic slump of unprecedented scale" (Wecter 14; Derbyshire 94). As evidence of

the Great Depression slowly filtered out from the Wall Street trading floor, more and more Americans began to feel the effects of the crisis. Dixon Wecter recalled in 1948 that "[s]oon, lowered income and unemployment were seen in constant interaction, forcing the national economy into a descending spiral. […] cit[ies] felt the shock first." (16) As a result, urban centers like Detroit – devastated by the sharp decline in automotive sales across the country – became "virtually impoverished;" in June, 1932, the Mayor's Unemployment Committee described the toll of the Depression on the city: "For the coming year, Detroit can see no possibility of preventing widespread hunger and slow starvation through its own unaided resources" (Chandler, *Depression* 44). In other cities, such as St. Louis, Missouri, social workers began documenting that both adults and children "scrambled to get something to eat" by digging in city garbage dumps (Kyvig 226). By 1932, an "estimated 28 percent of the nation's households, containing 34 million people, did not have a single employed wage earner" (Kyvig 209). Further estimates regarding the toll of the Depression through 1932 reported:

> […] eighty-five thousand business failures with liabilities of four and a half billion dollars and the suspension of five thousand banks. Nine million savings accounts were wiped out, and wage losses upwards of twenty-six billion dollars sustained (Wecter 17).

For countless individuals, the economic depression presented a stark contrast to the gaudy consumerism of the 1920s; in many ways, it was the end of yet another era. During the first three years of the crisis, after almost ten years of "general prosperity" and "repeated assurances from business and government leaders that such conditions had become permanent," Americans were forced to adjust to a new landscape that included thousands of homeless drifters living "in abandoned factories, freight cars on sidings or shacks made of waste lumber and

flattened tin cans"[197] (Kyvig 210; Wecter 38). Famously, many of these homeless camps came to be known as "Hoovervilles" out of contempt for the Hoover administration, which seemed unable (or unwilling) to attempt any corrective measures or offer any aid against the economic decline of the nation (Wecter 15). The struggle of the Hoover administration to meet the growing economic crisis was shockingly illustrated by the events surrounding the so-called Battle of Anacostia Flats. In 1932, approximately 20,000 veterans of World War I marched on Washington, D.C. in order to lobby Congress for the full payment of bonuses that had been promised to them in 1925 (to be paid out in 1945) (Derbyshire 115). These veterans, many of whom traveled with wife and children in tow, called themselves the "Bonus Expeditionary Force, the Bonus Marchers or the Bonus Army" and were "for the most part organized and disciplined […] camped out in Washington's parks and disused government buildings" (ibid). Many settled in the area known as Anacostia Flats. The response of Hoover's administration was to publicly portray the Bonus Army as menacing "hoodlums and communists" (Derbyshire 117). On July 28th, the administration attempted to eradicate the settlement on Anacostia Flats; in the ensuing riot, Hoover

> […] called in federal troops under the command of General Douglas MacArthur [….] [who responded with] cavalry (under the command of Major George S. Patton), machine gun tanks, bayonets, and tear gas, and (under the gaze of the press) promptly set out clearing and burning down the shanty town on Anacostia Flats by force (Derbyshire 116).

Even for veterans of the recent world war, there was little hope of economic help from any quarter. The billboards being put up across the country no longer adjured Americans to keep

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[197] It is important to note, as Kyvig has done, that the prosperity of the 1920s was unevenly distributed, with "at least two-fifths of the American population" living in poverty in the last years of the 1920s; for these individuals, the Depression "would intensify their struggle but otherwise represent nothing new in terms of their daily lives" (211).

moving forward, they now more often resembled the message of one chamber of commerce billboard, which instructed: "JOBLESS MEN KEEP GOING. WE CAN'T TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN" (*Jobless*).

This Side Of Heaven

In these early years of the crisis, as thousands of businesses closed and buildings sat empty, the "entire entertainment industry – movie studios, the record industry, the theater, ballrooms, and even radio – felt the severe sting of the depression [….] jazz was particularly hard hit" (Erenberg, *Swingin'* 5). Nightclubs and cabarets that had blared with the sounds of jazz bands competing against the raucous chatter of clientele struggled to survive in the newly austere nation; by 1930, "the death knell for jazz had been sounded in most of the prosperous cities capable of sustaining hundreds of individual artists and styles" (Morris 165). As Lewis Erenberg notes, nightclubs had "formed part of [a national] myth, standing as emblems of 1920s values – consumption, sexual expression, youth culture and social informality […]" ("From New York" 761). In post-crash America, however, "[t]heaters darkened and cabarets disappeared, one by one," leaving musicians "unable to locate acceptable replacements" for performance venues (Morris 165). In 1931, *Variety* summarized the dire prospects facing the entertainment industry, stating that "[s]how business, as the current year closes out, is in the most chaotic condition it has ever known" (qtd. in Erenberg, *Swingin'* 13).

Jobs became as hard to come by for musicians as for everyone else and, as a result, New York – the "depression-ravaged, streamlined" center of the popular music industry – was glutted with musicians

> […] attempt[ing] to sign on with dance bands, radio stations, Broadway pit orchestras, and even the Muzak Corporation […]. [By] 1934 nearly one-fifth of all AFM [American Federation of Musicians] members [in the country] belonged to New York's

Local 802 (Peretti 167).

The city could hardly accommodate the influx of jazz musicians looking for work. Numerous jazz musicians later recalled the difficulties of surviving in the profession during the early years of the Depression; Danny Barker, just one example of many, had this to say of his experience playing Harlem's Lenox Club during this time:

> The depression for musicians in New York – Man it was a bitch! [….] Some mornings we'd make 75¢, other mornings we'd get 25¢. Everybody cooperated because there was nowhere else to go and in fact nobody had nothin' (qtd. in Morris 167).

Max Kaminsky similarly recalled the necessity of jazz musicians supporting each other in the first years of the Depression; after managing to secure a steady gig that paid well enough, he began

> [his] own private bread line outside of Delmonico's every night […]. [He'd] be at the side door with a pocketful of fifty-cent pieces for the out-of-work musicians waiting in the cold (qtd. in Peretti 166).

Many musicians simply could not hold out for better times, as evidenced by the decimated numbers of the American Federation of Musicians, whose membership "declined from 146,326 in 1928 to 101,111 in 1934 […]" (Peretti 165). Other AFM members – in numbers exceeding 12,500 – "received relief employment" from the Works Progress Administration, formed after Franklin Roosevelt assumed the presidency in 1933; Sidney Bechet actually opened a dry-cleaning shop in Harlem to stay financially afloat (Peretti 165, 167).

Job scarcity was not the only difference facing jazz musicians in the wake of the stock market crash. America's musical landscape was also changing in response to the crisis. Radio broadcasts, which had "begun as a novelty" in the years immediately following World War I, became increasingly important as a source for popular entertainment to Americans across the

country who could no longer afford to attend live venues or, perhaps, no longer had operating neighborhood venues to visit[198] (Young and Young 1). Although the entertainment industry was struggling in the first three years of the Depression, radio revenue slowly continued to grow[199] (Stamm 62-3). As a transmitter of entertainment culture, the radio broadcasting medium certainly had the ear of the nation; in 1925, an estimated "10 percent of U.S. households owned radios," but by 1935 that number had increased to an incredible "67 percent of homes"[200] (Patnode 287; Young and Young 1). The significance of radios as an outlet for Americans struggling to cope during the worst years of the Depression was often suggested in the reports of social workers who found that many "Americans would sooner sell their refrigerators, bath tubs, telephones, and beds to make rent payments" than to contemplate selling their radio receiver (Lewis 29).

Radio broadcasting became an integral part of American life during the 1920s. During the war, radio technology was controlled by the U.S. Navy, with support from the Post Office, which had "claimed [wartime] operation of international cables" (Bradley 176). After the war, despite efforts by the U.S. Navy and Post Office to retain control of radio broadcasting, the technology reverted to private ownership with the 1919 formation of Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and, before long, radio stations like Pittsburgh's KDKA were "attract[ing] listeners, simply by playing popular records […] or [through] live hookups to dance halls, jazz clubs, and hotel

[198] In Detroit, for instance, *Variety* reported that "only one nightspot remained in operation" (qtd. in Erenberg, "From New York," p. 764). For a brief history of radio broadcasting in America during World War I and the 1920s, see, Bradley, pp. 175-86.
[199] In 1920, radio revenues were reported at $40 million; this sum increased to $80 million in 1932 and a whopping $145 million in 1937 (Stamm 62-3).
[200] By the end of the decade, that percentage would increase again with an estimated "81 percent of homes" in the United States owning at least one radio receiver (Young and Young 1).

ballrooms"[201] (Bradley 178-9, 183). While large urban centers, such as Chicago, initially supported an assortment of local, independent stations, by 1926 – with the formation of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) – radio broadcasting was moving toward network consolidation through station affiliation[202] (Vaillant 25; Bradley 184). By the onset of the Depression, New York "controlled the new world of radio music as Gotham-based radio networks like NBC and CBS [….] swallowed up many local stations [across the nation] and forced musicians to deal with a new set of potential employers […]" (Kenney 156). Sweet bands led by the likes of the collegiate New Englander Rudy Vallee or Canadian-born Guy Lombardo – whose orchestra was promoted as "The Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven" – dominated what remained of the hard-won mainstream market for popular music as "radio and phonograph executives shied away from [hot] jazz in favor of blander, safer" options"[203] (Erenberg, *Swingin'* 18; Teachout 70). The "sweet soft tunes" favored by bandleaders like Vallee provided audiences with a mellow, undemanding sound that offered a temporary balm against the stress and anxiety of the economic crisis and the continuing upheaval of the postwar years (Ulanov 158; Lewis 29). In 1930, Vallee, himself, related the success of his orchestra to the desire of Americans to "come home at night from a hard day's toil and seek comfort and rest in music of a

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[201] Bradley discusses the significance of radio broadcasting to the dissemination of jazz in the 1920s, noting that "white radio listeners, who may have first heard jazz thanks to their World War I experience, could reconnect to the music by anonymous [armchair] travel to forbidden places, thanks to the turn of a dial" (183).

[202] The concept of affiliate stations, introduced by RCA president David Sarnoff, was to create a "network" to unite disparate independent radio stations under one corporate identity (in this case, NBC); the stations would "offer similar programming," which in turn would provide "large enough audiences to interest national sponsorship" (Bradley 184).

[203] Sweet jazz typically referred to music played in a "sedate and restrained" manner, with "uncomplicated and soothing" arrangements – the "perfect background for polite social dancing, with innocuous, bouncy rhythms that would never get in the way of conversation and dinner" (Young and Young 119). For more on the popularity of sweet bands in the early years of the Depression, see Ulanov 156-9.

sweet, smooth, quiet nature" (qtd. in Erenberg, *Swingin'* 20). The mainstream popularity of these bands during the worst years of the Depression is evidenced by the fan mail their radio performances generated, as in this rather emphatic example sent to NBC: "Rudy Vallee is more wonderful than Beethoven's Sonatas" (qtd. in Goldfarb Marquis 396). Where, in the pre-crash prime of places like Chicago's South Side, speakeasy and nightclub owners often sought out hot jazz bands as a compliment to the edgy, illicit image of their establishments and independent radio stations even "brought the artistry and excitement of African American jazz […] to the mainstream […] via race records," network radio executives in the early days of the Depression had no reason to broadcast bands that might shock or isolate their broader listening audience[204] (Vaillant 26).

Advertising also greatly influenced the radio executive's preference for hiring sweet bands. The relationship of radio broadcasting and advertising had always been a close one, with debates raging as early as 1922 regarding the "audience's tolerance for commercial messages"[205] (Goldfarb Marquis 387). By 1932, however, advertising ruled the airwaves; *Fortune* complained that at the start of the economic crisis, sponsors:

> […] still hesitated to put a substantial advertising pill into their amusement sugar [….] Radio was polite. Radio was genteel. Radio was the guest in the home, not the salesman on the doorstep [….] But some eighteen months of further Depression have changed all that[206] (qtd. in Goldfarb Marquis 392).

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[204] Vaillant makes the important point that, even with the mainstream broadcast of race records in the 1920s, African Americans were "barred from the broadcast room prior to 1928 [….] [meaning that] self-generated representations were few" (26).

[205] Before becoming president, Herbert Hoover served as Secretary of Commerce for Presidents Harding and Coolidge; in that capacity, he repeatedly warned radio executives that too much "advertising chatter" would be "the quickest way to kill broadcasting" (Goldfarb Marquis 387).

[206] Goldfarb Marquis goes on to quote an unnamed local announcer who stated that "the hard sell, repetition and blatancy were standard. Sirens, gongs and even pistol shots frequently introduced announcements" (392).

Realizing the profit potential inherent in radio, despite the continuing economic crisis, sponsors invested large sums into radio advertising; in 1931, for instance, an estimated $35.5 million was spent to advertise on the big radio networks (Goldfarb Marquis 392). In many cases, radio sponsors used their financial clout to gain control of programming; for example, the songs played during Guy Lombardo's popular radio show were selected by "the wife of the advertising manager" of his sponsor – General Cigar Co. (Goldfarb Marquis 392). As radio broadcasting became progressively more corporatized, the "prospects for multiple musical publics on the airwaves" became smaller, leaving many musicians no choice but to adapt or quit (Vaillant 57).

While the mainstream appetite for restrained, sweet jazz became more firmly entrenched and job opportunities for musicians remained desperately scarce, the post-crash jazz scene was further reshaped by the loss of familiar fixtures and faces that had helped define jazz culture in the 1920s. In Harlem, for example, the legendary association of the Ellington orchestra with the Cotton Club was coming to an end; after participating in their first Hollywood picture in 1930 and being invited to meet President Hoover in 1931, the orchestra left Harlem to begin an extensive period of cross-country touring[207] (Gioia 129). Clarinetist Barney Bigard later recalled the frenetic schedule of touring with Ellington in the 1930s:

> "[…] of all my years these were the most confusing years. Your head stays in a permanent muddle because of the traveling. […] The world was now made up of theaters, trains, boats, hotel rooms, movie lots, radio stations, band buses which all come under the all encompassing heading 'The rigors of the never ending road'" (qtd. in Peretti 172).

[207] The Ellington orchestra expanded their tours to Europe in 1933, garnering high praise from critics; the British publication *Melody Maker* began praising the Ellington outfit before they even arrived in the country, stating that "America does not honestly know or appreciate the real treasure she possesses in Duke Ellington" (Gioia 131).

In midtown Manhattan, another fixture of the jazz scene called Plunkett's – a speakeasy on West 53rd Street that acted as a kind of social club for white jazz musicians in the late-1920s – was being superseded by the Onyx Club, located on West 52nd Street (Burke 323). In its heyday, Plunkett's had been the ultimate meeting ground for white jazz musicians, who could find themselves rubbing shoulders with icons like Bix Beiderbecke on any given evening (ibid). Bix, however, was dead by 1931 – the result of pneumonia and alcoholism – and the Onyx Club was quickly "put[ting] Plunkett's out of business"[208] (Sudhalter and Evans 329-34; Burke 323-4). Across the country, in large and small ways, the Depression was disorienting jazz culture – deserting centers like Chicago's South Side and redistributing (or destroying) individual and group talent. The effervescent jazz culture of the 1920s was fading into memory, its aural and physical landmarks dissolving or being remade into something new. Through the lens of New York City, F. Scott Fitzgerald remarked on the fading glow of the Jazz Age in the essay "My Lost City," describing the city he observed as an "echoing tomb":

> Among the ruins a few childish wraiths still played to keep up the pretense that they were alive, betraying by their feverish voices and hectic cheeks the thinness of the masquerade. Cocktail parties, a last hollow survival from the days of carnival, echoed to the plaints of the wounded […] and the groans and wails of the dying: "Did you see that United States Steel is down three more points? (Fitzgerald 109, 114).

[208] The move from Plunkett's to the Onyx Club illustrated a broader shift in New York jazz culture toward 52nd Street, which would become legendary in jazz historiography. See, for instance, Arnold Shaw, *The Street That Never Slept: New York's Fabled 52nd Street*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1971.

The Big Broadcast

The mood of the nation attained a much-needed boost in 1933, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt took over from the embittered and embattled Hoover administration.[209] While campaigning, Roosevelt barnstormed the nation in a charm offensive that emphasized an optimistic outlook for the future, encapsulated in his choice of theme song, the popular tune "Happy Days are Here Again."[210] In his first hundred days in office, Roosevelt signed an unprecedented (and highly controversial) series of recovery initiatives, known collectively as the New Deal; in the words of Secret Service agent Edmund Starling – whose White House career began with Woodrow Wilson – Roosevelt was like "an injection of adrenalin in the veins of public morale" (qtd. in Alter 221).

One of Roosevelt's first initiatives was the repeal of Prohibition, which resulted in "beer parties" across the nation (Alter 277). Repeal of the Volstead Act, as well as "other New Deal measures" like the Works Progress Administration (WPA), breathed new life into the struggling nightclub industry (Erenberg, "From New York" 762). According to *Variety*, there were "more niteries, pubs, taverns, roadside inns, large and small cafes, hotels and nite spots offering entertainment […] than there were speakeasies during the Great Drought" of Prohibition (qtd. in Erenberg, *Swingin'* 31). While some scholars and critics, such as Burton Peretti, have argued that Prohibition repeal worked against jazz musicians by reducing their value to club owners who "no

[209] After losing the election by a landslide, Hoover famously refused to speak or to acknowledge the waving crowds during the ride he and president-elect Roosevelt shared on their way to the Capitol for FDR's inauguration, March 4, 1933 (Alter 213-4).
[210] Roosevelt's energetic optimism also came through in the way he campaigned; for instance, in a break with tradition, he traveled to Chicago in 1932 to accept – in person – the nomination of his party to be their presidential candidate. What made this action particularly memorable, for many, was the fact that he arrived in Chicago by airplane. As Jonathan Alter points out, this was only five years after Lindbergh's celebrated solo flight across the Atlantic and "only a small fraction [of Americans] had ever been in an airplane; before FDR, no "American president or presidential candidate have ever traveled in one" (115-6).

longer needed [jazz] to attract customers into [illicit] speakeasies and bootleggers' nightclubs," others have cited the resultant legitimization of the nightclub industry as an important step toward the next major development in jazz[211] (165). Erenberg, for instance, argues that the end of Prohibition allowed "legitimate entrepreneurs" into the nightclub industry, which meant that money was no longer being diverted to racketeers and bootleggers for protection and illicit alcohol; this relative freedom from crime syndicates meant that club owners "soon had the revenue to hire touring big bands" and that jazz musicians had:

> […] their chance to leave the radio studios where they had been languishing [in order to] start their own bands and play creative music once again (*Swingin'* 31).

Ironically, it was radio that paved the way for the next big thing. Throughout the early 1930s, swing music was already being played by various bands across the country (Shaw 68). In 1932, Ellington's orchestra recorded "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," which many credit as the "first use of the term in a pop tune" (Shaw 69). In Kansas City, big band leaders like William "Count" Basie – who took over Bennie Moten's orchestra in 1933 – were developing regional versions of the sound that would define the swing era (Driggs and Haddix 4-5, 124). However, as Marshal Stearns argued, this "swinging, relaxed, powerful" music was "for the most part unheard" because it often failed to gain the support of sponsors who could

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[211] Ronald Morris, in his work *Wait Until Dark: Jazz and the Underworld, 1880-1940*, also argues that Prohibition repeal did little to improve "the field for jazz artists," citing factors like heavy taxation on alcohol as a reason for organized crime to remain involved in alcohol distribution at nightclubs; one entertainer of the period described the mobster presence in clubs on New York's 52nd Street – where the aforementioned Onyx Club was located – recalling that "every night […] hard-boiled thugs used to fill the joints. It was a carnival time" (170-2).

provide national exposure via commercial radio programs or bookings at major venues[212] (qtd. in Shaw 68).

In 1935, however, the paradigm changed. That spring, the Benny Goodman Orchestra began a national tour, their first venue being the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City, where the comparatively sedate "Guy Lombardo was an established favorite;" Goodman's orchestra was fired after one night (Shaw 61). The rest of the tour proceeded to garner mixed reviews until the band arrived at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles on August 21; here, they were met with a crowd of eager fans "[s]warming the bandstand in their excitement […]" (Young and Young 129; Gioia 145). Scholars have long attributed Goodman's reception at the Palomar to the West Coast following of his radio broadcasts for the NBC show *Let's Dance*. The program was sponsored by the National Biscuit Company, which sent employees to a series of band auditions from which three orchestras were selected: Xavier Cougat (for "the Latin sound"), Ken Murray (for "sweet balladry"), and Goodman, who was reportedly chosen by the very slim margin of one vote (Shaw 61). NBC broadcast *Let's Dance* from New York "on fifty-three stations" coast-to-coast from 10:30 P.M. to 1:30 A.M. every Saturday (Shaw 61; Young and Young 128). Given the three hour difference between coasts, listeners in California were tuning in to *Let's Dance* during prime time; the result, as Ted Gioia relates, was "a large, enthusiastic audience […] waiting for [the] band when it arrived" in Los Angeles (140-1). Word of the Palomar success spread and, by their return to New York, Goodman and his band "had gained some celebrity […]

[212] The Basie orchestra, for instance, finally attained national prominence due to "late-night broadcasts on a powerful Midwestern radio station" where "John Hammond, a young jazz critic who also doubled as a talent scout, heard them on his car radio one night" (Young and Young 125).

[and] possessed known, successful qualities"[213] (Young and Young 129). The success of the Palomar was soon overshadowed by successive concerts, such as the March 3, 1937, appearance of the Goodman orchestra at the Paramount Theater on Times Square, where approximately 21,000 people attended the show and thousands had begun queuing in the "cold, wintry morning" air before 8 A.M. (Young and Young 129-30).

For many, however, the Goodman orchestra reached the pinnacle of its success on January 16, 1938, when they "stormed one of the citadels of high culture" by performing at Carnegie Hall; trumpeter Harry James supposedly told a bandmate that he "felt like a whore in church" (Young and Young 130; Teachout 66). Like Paul Whiteman before him, Goodman was crowned by popular opinion – this time as the King of Swing; however, unlike his predecessors in the 1920s, Goodman and his contemporaries were creating a jazz style "linked less to crime and aristocratic decadence and more to central American values" (Shaw 40; Erenberg 31). With the rise of swing music, jazz "came the closest it has ever come to widespread popularity" (Young and Young 118).

A Wry Joke

Jazz was not the only form of popular culture winning a newfound acceptance in mainstream America. From roughly 1933 to 1939, pulp magazines – and *Black Mask* in particular – enjoyed a "golden age" as Depression-era "artists and audiences expressed fresh interest in previously marginalized forms of pop and folk culture," in part thanks to the efforts of federal initiatives like the WPA (McCann 147-8). Although Dashiell Hammett had begun the trend toward mainstream acceptance of hard-boiled fiction, he was, by the end of 1933, an

[213] According to Young and Young, it was on the return leg of their national tour – while performing at the Congress Hotel in Chicago – that the term "swing" was first used as a label for "the new music" (129).

“alcoholic mess” working on his final novel (the only one not serialized in *Black Mask*), titled *The Thin Man* (Hiney 80). In December of that year, the man who would become Hammett’s successor as the top writer for *Black Mask* saw his first story, titled “Blackmailers Don’t Shoot,” published under the editorship of Joseph Shaw[214] (Rzepka 201-2). Just one year earlier, Raymond Chandler’s involvement with hard-boiled pulps would have seemed unthinkable. In 1932, as thousands of World War I veterans were being evacuated from Anacostia Flats under threat of tear gas and bayonets, Chandler – also a veteran of the war – was experiencing his own quieter loss of the field. Following demobilization in 1919, he had spent the post-war boom of the 1920s working as an executive for the Dabney Oil Syndicate in Los Angeles; in 1932, however, he suddenly found himself with “no job or property – or immediate prospect of either” (Hiney 50, 70). Chandler was fired as a result of economic downsizing, as well as his increasingly debilitating alcoholism, which he blamed on the war, maintaining that it was the “only discernable legacy” of his time in the service (Hiney 68-9; Phillips 15). With a wife to support and no prospects in sight, forty-four year old Chandler left California to consider his future, staying with army friends in Seattle while attempting to quit drinking; he returned to Los Angeles after two months, sober and with an idea forming toward his future (Hiney 70).

The idea came to him while “[w]andering up and down the Pacific Coast in an automobile” (qtd. in Miller 65). According to Chandler, it was during these idle treks that he began reading pulps like *Black Mask*, simply because they were cheap and more appealing than the slick magazines more often associated with women’s interests (Miller 65). From this arbitrary pulp reading, he chose his new purpose.[215] Chandler later recalled how he was “struck”

[214] Hammett’s *The Thin Man* was published one month later, in January, 1934 (ibid).
[215] Although the idea of writing for a pulp audience was entirely new to Chandler, the idea of pursuing work as a professional writer was not; during his years in England, following his

by the writing style of the hard-boiled pulp, which he characterized as "pretty forceful and honest, even though it had its crude aspect;" he decided to try his own hand at writing a story for *Black Mask*, feeling it "might be a good way to learn to write fiction and get paid a small amount of money at the same time" (ibid). As biographer Tom Hiney notes, the decision to write fiction – particularly pulp fiction – was "a precarious career move for someone in his mid-forties who had never written any fiction before […]" (71). To increase his chances of success in his newly chosen profession, Chandler enrolled in a local night course for fiction writers and began working on "pastiches of other writers' stories," as well as keeping notebooks full of details – both observed and imagined – which could be used later in his own work (Hiney 72-3). In December, 1933, after multiple rewrites, his first story appeared in the pages of *Black Mask*, having been accepted by Shaw for $180, which amounted to one penny per word – the going rate for pulps (Phillips 17). Although a far cry from the approximately $3000 per week that Chandler used to earn as an oil executive, he had successfully broken into the hard-boiled pulp market (Hiney 57).

While his pulp stories initially brought "little fame and not much financial benefit," his successful entry into the pulp publishing field was something of a wonder (Penzler 867). Nothing in his life previous to December, 1933, indicated the least affinity with hard-boiled fiction; as novelist Patricia Highsmith stated, "Chandler's style does not much jibe with his character or his life" ("Introduction" 2). Chandler, himself, once commented on the incongruity of his involvement in hard-boiled pulps, stating "[…] I wrote for *Black Mask*. What a wry joke" (qtd. in Symons, "Aesthete" 24). Born on July 23, 1888, Chandler spent his earliest years moving

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education at Dulwich and a brief stint in the civil service, he "wrote youthfully fluent and earnest prose and poetry for the London magazines" (Knight, pp. 116-7). As Rzepka states, Chandler's "life as a man of letters lasted for some three years before he had to face reality" (203).

between the extremes of Chicago's tough urban growth – which he associated with the memory of witnessing a cop "shoot a little white dog to death" – and the comparatively prosaic summers spent in the "throwback to old farming America" of Plattsmouth, Nebraska – which he associated with country scenes, such as the "rocking chairs on the edge of the sidewalk in a solid row outside the [local] hotel" (Hiney 3-6; Durham 8). At the age of seven, life changed dramatically for Chandler. His parents divorced in 1895, after which he and his Irish-born mother left the United States; following a failed attempt to settle with family in Ireland, mother and son moved to the London suburbs, where they were taken in by extended family (Hiney 7-10).

The experiences of the next seventeen years would have a tremendous impact on Chandler's future career as a hard-boiled writer. Made to feel like a poor relation with no "clear social class [or] nationality" among his mother's London relatives, Chandler associated his childhood home life with the expectation of "today a pat on the back, tomorrow a kick in the teeth" (Nolan, *Black Mask* 224-5; Hiney 11). In 1900, at the age of twelve, he entered Dulwich Preparatory, an English public school in the style of Eton or Harrow, though less select[216] (Durham 9). As Hiney notes, Chandler joined the public school tradition at a time of high patriotism: Queen Victoria still reigned and the Second Boer War was raging; the mood of the school was, perhaps, summed up in the toast made daily by the boys: "To my country, right or wrong" (12). During his four years at Dulwich, Chandler studied the Classics while absorbing the school spirit instilled by headmaster (and novelist) A.H. Gilkes, who espoused a "self-sacrifitic" ideal of "benign patriarchy," which Hiney cites as the inspiration behind Chandler's:

> […] distinct male heroes, men of integrity, driven by decency

[216] According to Hiney, Dulwich was home to a number of future writers including P.G. Wodehouse, C.S. Forester and A.E.W. Mason (author of *The Four Feathers*) (18).

> beyond the call of duty and fashion; […] "middle-brow" modern protagonists lacking in pretensions but possessed of a sense of honour that got them repeatedly in (and out of) trouble (12-3, 19).

Despite the powerful influence of Gilkes and the nationalistic fervor of life at Dulwich, Chandler later reflected on his time overseas as a period of unhappy rootlessness:

> I had grown up in England and all my relatives were either English or Colonial. And yet I was not English. I had no feeling of identity with the United States, and yet I resented the kind of ignorant and snobbish criticism of Americans that was current at the time [….] But I wasn't one of them [either]. I didn't even speak their language. I was, in effect, a man "without a country" (qtd. in Goulart 46).

Following Dulwich, Chandler decided to remain in England, becoming a naturalized citizen in 1907, while attempting to become a professional writer; he achieved a modicum of success with the publication of a few poems and essays in publications like *Westminster Gazette* and *The Academy* (Phillips 14). By 1912, however, he admitted defeat and decided to return to the United States, settling in Los Angeles, where he undertook a number of odd-jobs that included "working on an apricot ranch for ten hours a day and stringing tennis rackets for Spalding for fifty-four hours a week" (Durham 12-3). Armed with a posh English accent and public school education, Chandler admitted to "a contempt for the [California] natives" that he lived and worked alongside; now that he was again living among Americans, he felt more culturally at home among the English (Phillips 14). In August, 1917, this allegiance was made explicit when he joined the war effort on behalf of England, enlisting in the Canadian Expeditionary Force as a naturalized British subject (ibid). Assigned to the kilt-wearing Gordon Highlanders of Canada, Chandler's regiment found itself in the trenches on the front lines of France by spring, 1918; Chandler, himself, became a platoon commander responsible for leading men directly into enemy fire (Nolan, *Black Mask* 225). In June, 1918, he was the sole survivor of a German artillery attack on the bunker occupied by his unit (Nolan, *Black Mask* 225-6). Sent to

England to recover from shell shock, he was transferred to the Royal Air Force, where he underwent pilot training in Sussex until the November Armistice put an end to the war, at which point he reluctantly returned to California (Phillips 14-5).

On his way back to Canada for demobilization, Chandler composed a short piece titled "Trench Raid," which marked a "profound shift in the way he wrote" (Hiney 44). After Dulwich, his poetry and essays had been intellectual pieces Chandler later described as being "brilliant about nothing," but there was no artificial brilliance in his description of trench warfare, as evidenced from this brief passage:

> As he pushed aside the dirty blanket that served as a gas curtain the force of the bombardment hit him like the blow from a club at the base of the brain. He groveled against the wall of the trench, nauseated by the din. He seemed to be alone in a universe of incredibly brutal noise….Time to move on. Mustn't stay too long in one place (qtd. in Hiney 44).

Here, intellectual cleverness is replaced by blunt, "tangible detail" (Hiney 44). The war helped prepare Chandler for the forceful honesty of hard-boiled fiction, which he would find so striking more than a decade later. In attempting to express the harsh reality of his war experience, he abandoned the smart style of his prewar writings, utilizing instead a "direct style of communication which is clear and precise without sacrificing poetic beauty" – a style he would come to associate with the emerging hard-boiled American tradition and its "vital world of vernacular creativity"[217] (Beekman 159; McCann 146).

The Big Sleep

The vital world of pulps proved to be fertile ground for the development of what would become Chandler's trademark style (Phillips 18). His short story output was hardly prolific – he

[217] According to McCann, Chandler came to view the hard-boiled language of the pulps as "a repository of neglected popular virtues," where he "discovered the 'hard vulgarity,' the 'strident wit,' and the 'utterly unexpected range of sensitivity' hidden in 'the American mind'" (147).

published only twenty titles in the pulps between 1933 and 1939 – but each story progressively sharpened his image of the hard-boiled detective, culminating in the iconic character of Philip Marlowe, who debuted in Chandler's first novel, *The Big Sleep*[218] (Goulart 46-7). Chandler's most famous protagonist reflected the contradictions of his creator. Like Chandler, Marlowe was something of an outsider in the hard-boiled genre; unlike other tough-guy protagonists of the era, he was "a thinker rather than a man of violent action, and his college education [gave] him a love of poetry, classical music and solving chess problems" (Haining 102-4). Echoing the values that Dulwich and headmaster Gilkes instilled in Chandler as a school boy, Marlowe consistently put the "requirements of justice" before his own needs, resulting in a professional status "always on the verge of insolvency" (Haining 104). For many readers, the perceived similarities between Chandler and Marlowe were so strong that Chandler had to address the issue, offering this irreverent statement to put an end to the speculation:

> I am exactly like the characters in my books. I am very tough and have been known to break a Vienna roll with my bare hands. I do a great deal of research, especially in the apartments of tall blondes. I do not regard myself as a dead shot, but I am a pretty dangerous Man with a wet towel. But all in all I think my favourite weapon is a $20 bill (qtd. in Haining 106).

Following Hammett's lead, Chandler published *The Big Sleep* with Kopf in 1939; it became an instant classic in the genre.[219] Ostensibly concerning Marlowe's efforts to rid the wealthy Sternwood family of a pesky blackmailer, the novel becomes a full-on descent "into the L.A. underworld" that uncovers pornography, drugs and murder (Cassuto 82). In an effort to

[218] E.M. Beekman categorizes Chandler's fictional output as "remarkably small" due to his habit of working "slowly and carefully": "He cared about the choice of words, the rhythm of a sentence, the building of a paragraph, the architecture of a scene and the composition of a novel" (156).

[219] The 1946 film version of *The Big Sleep*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, also became a classic; William Faulkner was among the film's script writers (Phillips 55).

protect the pride of the Sternwood patriarch, the aging and ailing General, the novel ends with Marlowe withholding the truth of his discoveries – that the youngest Sternwood daughter, Carmen, murdered her brother-in-law (Rusty Regan) after he refused her sexual advances, and that her sister, Vivian (Mrs. Regan), has been working to cover-up the crime in an attempt to shield Carmen. The plot is notoriously difficult to follow; according to legend, director Howard Hawks wired Chandler in 1946, in an effort to untangle who killed one of the characters in the story, to which Chandler could only reply, "No idea"[220] (Cassuto 85). Unlike the traditional puzzle-mystery, Chandler's novel "offers none of the clean, cathartic redemption that typically ended pre-hard-boiled detective stories" (Cassuto 82). Marlowe is a protagonist who "does his detective work because he gets attached to the people involved, not because he wants to know how a corpse got into a locked room" (Athanasourelis 78; Cassuto 85). At the same time, Marlowe's attachment to people separates him from typical hard-boiled protagonists who, in the style of Carroll John Daly's "shoot first" mentality, achieve heroic status in large part through their relationship with violence (Server 65; Athanasourelis 78).

For many scholars, Marlowe is the hard-boiled, modern day equivalent of the medieval knight errant, an association made "overt […] [through] Marlowe's observation of the knight in a stained-glass window at the Sternwood mansion" (Moore 38). The image of the knight appears in the opening paragraphs of *The Big Sleep*, when – at "about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the [Los Angeles] foothills" – Marlowe arrives at the Sternwood estate and notices:

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[220] Several versions of this anecdote exist. According to Gene Phillips, Chandler's response to Hawk's facetiously read "The butler did it" (56). The more commonly repeated version of the exchange records Chandler's response simply as: "No Idea" (Cassuto, *Sentimentality* 85). In another reading of this anecdote, Stephen Knight suggests Chandler might have purposefully withheld the answer to Hawk's query because he felt the answer was obvious to anyone who carefully read the novel (118).

> […] a broad stained-glass panel showing a knight in dark armor rescuing a lady who was tied to a tree and didn't have any clothes on but some very long and convenient hair. The knight had pushed the visor of his helmet back to be sociable, and he was fiddling with the knots on the ropes that tied the lady to the tree and not getting anywhere. I stood there and thought that if I lived in the house, I would sooner or later have to climb up there and help him. He didn't seem to be really trying (Chandler 5).

Marlowe's romanticism separates him from both the coldly rational puzzle-mystery detective and the typically violence-driven hard-boiled counterpart. Because he is capable of feeling sympathy or communion with others, Marlowe participates in "appreciably less violence" than his hard-boiled contemporaries, instead "engaging his rhetorical skills on behalf of the innocent" (Athanasourelis 82). As E.M. Beekman suggested in "Raymond Chandler & an American Genre," the violence "in his work is the commonplace of [his] general habitat, while the toughness is really one of mind" (156). Marlowe could be violent when necessary, but he could also be cerebral.

In many ways, Marlowe – who comes to "represent the epitome of the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction" – is a blending of the English and American mystery traditions, just as Chandler is the product of his own Anglo-American experiences (Athanasourelis 3). While Marlowe's knightly persona, which prompts him to act because of his anachronistic adherence to a "tradition [that] demands it," suggests a link to the heroes of traditional British detectives like Lord Peter Wimsey, the hard-boiled world he inhabits transforms his chivalric actions into a "hopeless gesture of defiance toward a post-war world that cannot countenance it and refuses to be made meaningful by it" (Rzepka 202). As Leonard Cassuto suggests, the "contrast between a chivalric past and the present-day [hard-boiled] 'mean streets' […] defines the character of Marlowe in his milieu (85). Through characters like Marlowe, Chandler was able to craft an American idiom that was "filtered through an English lens" (Symons, "Aesthete" 24). His hard-

boiled stories reflected his own cultural status – "not wholly American, not English either" (Highsmith 4). As a result, he brought pulps:

> […] a deliberately poetic style and rueful romanticism [….] [a] synthesis of the lyrical and the hard-boiled. His distinctive simile-laden prose, and his concept of the private eye as a knight errant in a corrupt world, would [come to] influence uncountable numbers of followers in print and on film (Server 70-3).

For Chandler, the American hard-boiled pulp story would come to represent a "wellspring for the poetry of the masses, rife with slang and creative exuberance" (Earle 110).

Marlowe's unique persona quickly won over critics and readers. Much as jazz garnered unprecedented mainstream approval in the 1930s through the development of swing, which merged aspects of hot jazz and sweet balladry, Chandler's "softened and romanticized detective" improved the mainstream status of hard-boiled fiction (Landrum 134). As was the case with Dashiell Hammett's first novel, the Knopf publication of *The Big Sleep* caught the interest of reviewers who had ignored Chandler's work in the pulps, many of whom "now heaped praise" on his work, helping to "make Chandler a household name" (Haining 106). Before long, respectable publications were assuring readers: "To be caught with a Raymond Chandler whodunit in hand is a fate no highbrow reader should dread" (qtd. in Smith 35-6). In his often-referenced essay on detective fiction, titled "The Simple Art of Murder," Chandler summarized the characteristics of his ideal protagonist, concluding that:

> He talks as the man of his age talks, that is, with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettishness [….] He has a range of awareness that startles you, but it belongs to him by right, because it belongs to the world he lives in. If there were enough like him, I think the world would be a very safe place to live in, and yet not too dull to be worth living in (15).

Perhaps, in blending elements of both the classical British and hard-boiled American mystery traditions, Chandler's most iconic works – and especially his creation of Philip Marlowe – came

nearest to presenting postwar readers with the fiction of a safer world, still worth living in. As Sean McCann relates:

> Unlike Hammett's heroes, the Chandler detective would not work
> To disenchant the popular delusions that held other characters in
> Thrall. Nor would he, like the hero of the "classic" detective story,
> Gradually piece together the puzzle at the heart of the story (157).

Instead, Chandler's stories promised the potential redemption of community through the actions of chivalrous protagonist, who – although part of the hard-boiled world that surrounds him – is yet capable of "salvag[ing] the demotic and mundane features of everyday life" [221] (McCann 158).

The Program "St. Louis Blues" Will Not Be Heard Tonight

On the evening of March 13, 1938, radio announcer Bob Trout informed CBS listeners: "The program 'St. Louis Blues' will not be heard tonight;" instead, in what has been referred to as a technical and journalistic landmark, CBS aired "pickups direct from London, Paris and such other European capitals as at this late hour abroad have communications channels available" (qtd. in Goldfarb Marquis 408). The program, which included reports from such soon-to-be celebrated journalists as Edward R. Murrow and William L. Shirer, presented Americans with on-the-scene accounts of – and reactions to – the Nazi annexation of Austria (ibid). The *Anschluss* proved to be one of the defining events in the build-up to World War II, a war that would quickly overshadow its predecessor in mainstream American consciousness (Trout 247-8). World War II would, yet again, remake the world – continuing the process begun in 1914 – introducing nuclear warfare and laying the groundwork of the Cold War that would come to dominate East-West relations for decades to come.

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[221] In "The Simple Art of Murder," Chandler raised the issue of redemption with the statement: "In everything that can be called art there is a quality of redemption" (14). For more on the concept of redemption in Chandler's fiction, see, Phillips, pp. xxi-iii, and, Rippetoe, pp. 13-4.

Of course, popular culture changed along with the world. The 1940s saw the fragmentation of jazz into various sub-genres, encompassing the stylistic extremes of bebop and Dixieland revivalists (Gendron 131-2). Jazz was further destabilized, in 1941, by an industry dispute between The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and radio stations, leading to a ban on broadcasting all ASCAP-owned material – effectually, "the entire repertoire of current popular music" (Townsend 20-1). By the 1950s, newer genres – rock-'n'-roll, most notably – "came to dominate popular music" (DeVeaux 302). Pulp magazines also began struggling. During the war, "paper shortages, mailing delays, and other problems for publishers" caused page numbers to drop, while cover prices rose (Goulart 205-7). The pulp market also faced a rising challenge from the nascent field of mass-market paperbacks, which began in the United States in June, 1939, with the introduction of Pocket Books, which were advertised in *The New York Times* as: "THE NEW POCKET BOOKS THAT MAY REVOLUTIONIZE AMERICA'S READING HABITS"[222] (qtd. in O'Brien 33). By the 1950s, in the midst of another, more infamous Red Scare – spearheaded this time by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy – American readers began to move away from the hard-boiled detectives so popular during Prohibition and the Depression; now, what sold was the spy thriller – epitomized by the likes of British author Ian Fleming's James Bond stories – in the form of a cheap paperback.[223] The final issue of *Black Mask* appeared on newsstands in July, 1951 (Goulart 234). To a limited extent, jazz and hard-boiled fiction came together in the emerging film noir genre, which presented viewers with a dark and threatening vision of America's postwar urban

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[222] Goulart also cites the rise of television in the demise of pulp magazine sales. See, pp. 231-4.
[223] Hammett was among those caught up in the post-World War II Red Scare; despite having served in both World War I and World War II, Hammett was tried and jailed as a Communist sympathizer and threat to the security of the nation. See, Johnson, *Hammett*, pp. 238-72.

decay.[224] However, the heyday of jazz and the pulps, like the war that helped drive them to the forefront of American popular culture, was past.

[224] See, for instance, Butler, "In a Lonely Tone," pp. 308-17, and, Hare, *Pulp Fiction to Film Noir*.

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