In Search of Genetically Modified Music

Race and Musical Style in the Nineteenth Century

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I should begin by declaring immediately my standpoint that there is no such thing as race. Race and, by extension, racism may have a social reality but they have no sound scientific grounding whatsoever.[1] No convincing biological evidence has ever been produced that establishes the existence of different human races.[2] DNA analysis offers little support to theories of genetic difference, and has revealed that even the most geographically separate social groups vary in only 6 to 8 per cent of their genes.[3] Race does not present a medical problem when it comes to organ transplants. My research questions are, therefore: When and why did the idea of 'race' arise, and how did this fiction affect the production and consumption of music in the nineteenth century? In seeking answers, I make illustrative references to Liszt's Gypsy, Wagner's Jew, Celtic music, African-American music and American Indian music.

I will give a brief history of race theory and clarify some related terms, such as nationalism, culture and ethnicity. The word 'race' or its equivalent appears in European languages in the sixteenth century, and probably relates to concerns about descent among the European aristocracy.[4] It takes a long time to develop its modern meaning as a biological concept of human difference, and the adjective 'racial' does not appear in the English language until the 1860s. Robert Bernasconi argues that the concept of 'race' can be traced to the attempts at a scientific definition by Immanuel Kant, who was motivated by a desire to support monogenesis (the single-species theory of human origins) against polygenesis.[5]

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1 For detailed studies, see Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC, 1996), Jonathan Marks, *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* (New York, 1995), and Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder, CO, 1999).

2 Anthony Appiah points to the lack of genetic evidence to support the concept of race, in 'The uncompleted argument: Du Bois and the illusion of race', in *'Race,' Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr (Chicago, 1986), 21–37.

3 See Audrey Smedley, 'Race', *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 18 Macropaedia (Chicago, 2002), 844–54, 844.

4 Even in the eighteenth century it was necessary for candidates to 'prove a nobility of four races or descents' for some knighthoods. *Chambers Cyclopaedia*, 1727–41, cited under the entry 'Race', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1933), Vol. 8.

5 Robert Bernasconi, 'Who invented the concept of race?', in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Oxford, 2001), 11–36. The theory of polygenesis, of course, challenges the

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Kant's argument was that race was to be located in the characteristics that offspring could not avoid inheriting, such as skin colour. This is a crucial shift in meaning. When the Philistine Harapha refers to Samson as one of the 'unforeskinned race' in Milton's *Samson Agonistes* of 1671, he is clearly not commenting on an inherited characteristic.[6] Kant's only essay of the 1770s was 'Of the Different Human Races'. The next decade he published his 'Definition of the Concept of a Human Race' (1785), perhaps galled by Herder's refusal to accept race theory. Herder, while recognizing human diversity, thought racial divisions had no permanency and could change over time.[7] The difficulty presented by Kant's formulation is in deciding which qualities are unavoidably inherited and which are only presumed to be inherited. Around a hundred years later, we find Henry Galton, in *Hereditary Genius* (1869), attributing the success of the English upper class to the possession of inherited talents (rather than the inherited possession of power and money).

Kant was not the only philosopher in the late eighteenth century disseminating racial ideology – so, too, were Voltaire, Hume and Jefferson – but he was the first to seek and apply a definition of race with consistency. He was, perhaps, stimulated to do so by the work of Linnaeus, who had classified animals (including human beings with the primates) in his publications of 1735–59. *Homo sapiens* was a species with subdivisions, such as *Homo africanus* and *Homo europaeus*, but there also existed for Linnaeus other species of *Homo*, such as *ferus* and *monstrosus*. His *Genuine and Universal System of Natural History* has a frontispiece that illustrates this species confusion by depicting a young black girl being carried off by an orangutan. It was the classifications of natural historians such as Linnaeus and Buffon that, Foucault maintains, established a new episteme, or way of understanding the world, in which identity is 'defined by means of a general grid of differences'.[8] Previously, creatures were defined on their own terms (for example, a duck has feathers and floats on water), but now they were distinguished by what other creatures were not (a duck is not a swan because it quacks – I'm simplifying things here). A problem for their classifications, as Linnaeus and Buffon both recognized, was that there are continuities rather than gaps in nature, which throws up plenty of ambiguities, such as the flying squirrel.

In 1787, Blumenbach classified human beings into five varieties, but noted that boundaries blurred and blended between them. His 'Ethiopian' became, ironically, a popular adjective in the show bills and names of blackface minstrel troupes (for example, the Ethiopian Serenaders). His 'Caucasian' is still in use, though he gave this term to whites simply because he thought a skull found in Russia's Caucasus mountains was the most beautiful he had seen.[9] His term 'Caucasian' included

biblical account of creation. As recently as October 2004 a stormy debate was unleased when Australian anthropologists claimed to have discovered bones of a hitherto unkown human species on the Indonesian island of Flores (see Rex Dalton, 'Little lady of Flores forces rethink of human evolution', *Nature* (27 Oct. 2004), pub. online at www.nature.com/news/2004/041025/full/4311029a.html – accessed 18 Feb. 2005). It was not long, however, before a strong counterclaim was being made that *Homo floresiensis* was neither a new species nor a sub-species, but merely a pygmy version of *Homo sapiens* (see John Vidal, 'Bones of contention', *The Guardian*, *Life* supplement (13 Jan. 2005), 4–6).

6 *Samson Agonistes* (1671), line 1100.

7 His views are in Part 2 of *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1785), published just before the Kant essay; see Bernasconi, *Race*, 14 and 28.

8 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1970), orig. pub. as *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris, 1966), 145.

9 See Smedley, 'Race', 847.

Semites, who were usually seen as distant rather than proximate to North Europeans. Other kinds of classifying became entangled with ideas of race: for example, Jann Passler has shown how racial thinking influenced the classification of musical instruments in the nineteenth century.[10]

The first 'scientific' study of human races was accomplished by a Manchester physician, Charles White, in 1799, who concentrated on physical differences. Craniometry was developed by a Philadelphia physician, Samuel Morton, who thought skull measurements were the answer to racial classification and published the results in 1839 and 1844. He believed he had shown the existence of separate human species, and this work made him an influential polygenist. Influenced by Morton's work, Joseph-Arthur, comte de Gobineau wrote his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853–55). Gobineau posited three major races, black, white and yellow. The purest of the whites were the Aryans (in Sanskrit, 'Aryan' means 'noble' or 'of good family'), who were responsible for civilization and who only went into decline if they mixed their blood with others. Gobineau's essay was widely read, and found much favour in America and Germany. Anthropometry was another supposedly scientific method of distinguishing races that gained ground in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s, the Anthropological Society of London, to the distaste of some of its members, was attempting to use craniological and anatomical research to prove scientifically the inferiority of black people.[11] In the early twentieth century, the anthropologist Franz Boas discredited much of the existing 'scientific' evidence of race, showing, for instance, that cranial measurements could change in successive generations. Nevertheless, terms such as 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow', as hierarchical markers of taste in cultural consumption, have remained with us.[12]

Herbert Spencer, who saw life as a struggle in which the fittest survived, believed 'inferior races' would become extinct. He put his principles into practice by railing against help for the poor, women's rights and anything else he saw as 'flying in the face of nature'. It is unfortunate that the term social Darwinism instead of social Spencerism became attached to these views. It was certainly a hard-line vision that saw a struggle between *races* as the equivalent of a struggle between *species*. Darwin, as a monogenist, could not have endorsed it. Although Darwin's 1839 *Journal of Researches* shows he regarded humanity as occupying varying rungs on the ladder that leads to Western civilization, that is quite distinct from the ideas of Gobineau, who saw no progress in human development in the races he labelled black and yellow, and also refused to accept that the white race had ever been uncultivated.[13] In Britain, Thomas Carlyle believed in a hierarchy of races, while John Stuart Mill argued that, rather than nature, culture and science had created differences.[14] After 1900, an interest in genes and chromosomes followed the coming to light of the research done by Gregor Mendel in the

10 Jann Pasler, 'The utility of musical instruments in the racial and colonial agendas of late nineteenth-century France', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 129/1 (2004): 24–76.

11 See Christine Bolt, 'Race and the Victorians', in *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. C.C. Eldridge (London, 1984), 126–47.

12 See Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA, 1988).

13 See David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, 1993), 65.

14 See ibid., 66–7.

nineteenth century. However, neither genes nor blood groups offered any consistent way of distinguishing between people, and just as many differences could be found within a supposed race as when comparing it with another. The 'melting pot' idea in the USA was already around in the late nineteenth century as a metaphor for the mixing of proximate races (including Jews, but usually excluding Africans and Asians), but was given fresh impetus and popularity by Israel Zangwill's play *The Melting Pot* of 1908. Yet the dominant view of Americanness remained Anglo-Saxon. In its extreme form, as white supremacist thinking, it had roots not only in slave ownership, but also in the push west and the Indian wars.

Culture and ethnicity are the next terms to consider. Culture presents us with a concept of difference based on a group's customs and beliefs. Culture was the basis of the nation for Herder, and Matthew Arnold was to return to that idea and to become influential in the UK and USA by making distinctions between races and nations along *cultural* lines. He comes close to initiating a move from questions of racial difference to those of ethnic difference – though the two concepts are blurred and overlap in his works. Arnold was clearly not drawing upon Victorian science, which made no distinction between race and culture.[15] It was Franz Boas who was the first to distinguish openly between culture and race in the early twentieth century.[16] Culture is acquired, and it is language, custom and shared history that provide a group with an ethnic rather than a racial identity. The distinction is that ethnicity is cultural and race biological. However, the term 'ethnic' bears a historical burden; it was commonly used to describe pagans or heathens before the middle of the nineteenth century, and tends to retain suggestions of minorities and cultural difference – few, for example, would think of Beethoven as an ethnic composer.[17]

Bound up with these ideas of race, culture and ethnicity are nations and nationalism. The idea of the *Volk* being the basis of the nation can be traced back to Herder, but a nation first and foremost presents us with a concept of difference based on a political unit. 'Nationalism', in Ernest Gellner's definition (1983), is 'a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.'[18] Ethnic divergences between rulers and the ruled are not to be tolerated. However, Gellner argues, the cultures that nationalism 'claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions, or are modified out of all recognition.'[19] Nationalism requires a centralized education system to impose a literate 'high culture', which frequently means that what was once a local dialect becomes an official state language. It is important for music to be part of a nation's

15 See Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800–1960* (London, 1982).

16 See Franz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture* (New York, 1940).

17 Ethnicity returned as an important concept for debate following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the USA, especially in the work of Frederick Barth, who argued in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) that the way a group determined whom to include or exclude was more important than their having a distinctive culture. It offered an explanation of why some groups kept an ethnic identity while sharing an American culture. However, as Werner Sollors has commented, 'it is still widespread practice to define ethnicity as otherness'. 'Who Is Ethnic?', in *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York, 1986), excerpted in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London, 1995), 219–22, 219.

18 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), 1.

19 Ibid., 56.

high culture: high-cultural heroes are needed for status and foreign esteem.[20] Slovakia or Greece, however beautiful their folk traditions, could not achieve the musical status of Germany or France without canonical composers. The 'national music hero' has to use folk traditions, all the same – since, once a nation has independence, these are seen as 'national' traditions and part of what justifies that national autonomy. Industrialization produced the conditions for nationalist aspirations, since it needed people to be literate, numerate and mobile in order to adapt to new occupations. In agrarian societies, religion counted most, since that was what held the state together despite a diversity of local and regional cultures. In eighteenth-century England, George II was chosen for the throne, even though he was 57th in line, because he was a Protestant; his being German was not an issue.

The final term we should consider is 'hybridity'. The first definition of 'hybrid' in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (1990) refers to the offspring of plants or animals of different species, but the contentious notion of mixed race provides the second definition. Thus, 'hybridity' would seem to hypostasize the notion of pure racial strains: without them, how can there be a hybrid? However, Homi Bhabha has deliberately given a positive twist to this negative term. He suggests that colonial domination is achieved by disavowing its responsibility for any deforming effects on the colonized population while, at the same time, introducing discriminatory practices. Such discrimination, Bhabha contends, is not between self and other, or mother culture and alien culture, but 'between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something *different* – a mutation, a hybrid'.[21] He regards this as politically charged: 'The display of hybridity – its peculiar "replication" – terrorizes authority with the *ruse* of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery.'[22] Robert Young's idea of hybridity is similar to Bhabha's, in that he sees it as challenging the cultural practices that have been brought together, especially by denying them any former sense of uniqueness or purity they once may have been assumed to possess.[23]

For most of the nineteenth century, racial theorists thought hybridity differed according to whether or not the races involved were proximate or distant. Ironically, it appears that some political interpretations of cultural hybridity now rest on not dissimilar ground. A mixture of black South African vocal practices and Victorian choralism is much more likely to be called a 'hybrid' than Smetana's *Ma Vlast*, even though Smetana has been given credit for being the first to introduce a distinct Czech voice into European concert music.[24] Moreover, Smetana was intervening in a tradition over which Austria, the ruling power over his homeland, held great sway.

There again, 'hybridity' has simply become another word for 'mixture' in some people's writing, just as 'deconstruction' has been used by others as an alternative

20 See Zdzislaw Mach, 'National anthems: the case of Chopin as a national composer', in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford, 1994), 61–70.

21 Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs taken for wonders', in *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), 102–22, 111.

22 Ibid., 115.

23 Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London, 1995).

24 See Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era* (London, 1947), 296.

word for 'analysis'. Yet, if we were to regard the Scottish songs of Baroness Nairne or the Irish songs of Lady Dufferin as hybrids we would be a long way from Bhabha's concept. Many of the contributors to Georgina Born's and David Hesmondhalgh's *Western Music and Its Others* (2000) use the term 'hybridity', but with little consistency and often to suggest no more than a mixture of styles with or without any jarring character. Born, herself, first distinguishes it from the notion of syncretism, the merging or blending of elements that formed part of acculturation theory, but then goes on to mention the 'fluidity of syncretisms and hybrids'.[25] Simon Frith restores the idea of struggle to the concept of hybridity, but then accepts that it can also be a new name for a familiar process, 'that of the continous change of traditions through shifting circumstances and interactions between people',[26] which, of course, does not necessarily involve struggle. Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, in *Music and the Racial Imagination* (2000), state that they wish to retain the word 'hybridity', yet insist that hybrid forms 'occupy nearly all cultural terrain', and stress the 'countless cross-referential engagements' that result from migrations.[27] Some years earlier, however, Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), noted that, while theories of creolization, métissage and hybridity challenged the discourses of cultural nationalism, they also constituted a litany of impurity for ethnic absolutists and, thus, he found none of them satisfactory for naming processes of cultural mutation.[28] I doubt, myself, whether any of these terms can be wrenched completely from their negative associations, no matter how many postmodern quotation marks are put around them.

The Jew

In my first brief case study, I'm concentrating on Wagner and just one character, Beckmesser. In his essays, Wagner lashes out at a number of different people and institutions he regards as to blame for what, today, we would call the 'dumbing down' of art. In 'Das Judentum in Musik' of 1850, he complains, 'What the great artists have toiled to bring into being for two thousand unhappy years, the Jew today turns into an art business'.[29] In 'Was ist Deutsch?' of 1865, he blames the

25 Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, eds, *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley, CA, 2000), 25–7.

26 Simon Frith, 'The discourse of world music', in *Western Music and Its Others*, ed. Born and Hesmondhalgh, 305–22, 311.

27 Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, eds, *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago, 2000), 30–31. Radano and Bohlman still have a tendency to hypostasize race: they state 'music is a domain that different races, depending on interpretation and case, can potentially share' (p. 8) and, in distinguishing ethnicity from race as something 'constructed through choice and the exercising of options', they imply that race is something about which there is no choice – despite their acknowledgement that it only exists as a 'shifting matrix of ideological constructions of difference' within the imagination (p. 5). This sits oddly with their countless references to race as a discursive construct and their general awareness of the danger of essentializing race.

28 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, 1993), 2. He coined the term 'black Atlantic' to avoid respect for national boundaries and to suggest, instead, diasporic multiplicity and the idea of 'the ship in motion' as a micro-cultural system and transporter of cultural artefacts.

29 Richard Wagner, 'Das Judentum in Musik' (1850). Orig. pub. in Franz Brendel's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 3 & 6 Sep., under pseudonym Karl Freigedank [Karl Freethought]

Reformation movement for leaving Germans with the 'dire misfortune' of a divided religion, and praises J.S. Bach for maintaining 'the German spirit's inmost life' at a time when German courts were 'swarming with Italian opera composers and virtuosi'.[30] In *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* of 1867, the 'frivolous' French stand accused. His later essays, 'Erkenne dich selbst' (1880) and 'Heldentum und Christentum' (1881) are informed by Gobineau's ideas on race. Having experienced early setbacks to his ambition (especially in Paris), Wagner may have made use of such ideas to further his own career and boost his own status. In 1841 Wagner had referred (without sarcasm) to Meyerbeer as 'the German messiah' and to Halévy as the 'best and most imaginative leader of the new French School'.[31]

Marc Weiner has shown how the body acts as a site for Wagner's displays of racial ideology.[32] Markers of a racialized Jewishness, for Wagner, were such things as a shrill voice, blinking eyes and hobbling feet. Wagner creates a thin, high voice for Beckmesser by employing a sadistically high tessitura for a baritone.[33] Beckmesser is a sexual threat to 'pure as the driven snow' Eva. He has a tottering gait, several references to which are in the stage directions. The *Volk* can respond intuitively to Walther's music, but not to Beckmesser's, which may be read in terms of Wagner's belief that the arts 'retain a certain connection with their natural soil, the real spirit of the people' but that such people are not to be found by the Jew, who, being 'thrown back to his own racial roots' finds he has never had an art of his own.[34] Odd that Wagner seems unaware of the growing popularity of Klezmer during the nineteenth century, for which much credit should be given to Michael Gusikov, player of the flute and *shtrofidl* (wooden tubes on a bed of straw, hit by sticks). Gusikov was so popular in 1830s Paris that women imitated his orthodox side curls in what was known as *coiffure à la Gusikov*. Did this completely pass Wagner by, or did he see it as one more example of 'frivolous' and 'unreliable' French taste?[35]

The idea that the Jew had no affinity with the German arises partly because the ideology of the family is closely linked to that of the *Volk*, and therefore leads readily to arguments about racial blood-lines.[36] You may think Wagner carries

(revd 1869). 'Judaism in Music', in *Richard Wagner: Stories and Essays*, ed. Charles Osborne (London, 1973), 23–39, 25.

30 Richard Wagner, 'Was ist Deutsch?', written 1865, pub. in *Bayreuther Blätter*, Feb. 1878), in *Richard Wagner*, ed. Osborne, as 'What is German?', 40–55, 50–51.

31 In his reports 'The opéra lies dying' and 'Farewell performances', in the Dresden *Abendzeitung*, Paris (23 Feb. and 6 Apr. 1841). See *Wagner Writes from Paris: Stories, Essays, and Articles by the Young Composer*, ed. and trans. Robert L. Jacobs and Geoffrey Skelton (London, 1973), 111 and 114. I am grateful to Jonathan Bellman for directing me towards this information.

32 Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln, 1995).

33 Wagner wrote in a letter that the high tessitura he had given Beckmesser was to convey 'an impassioned, screeching tone of voice'. *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, trans. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (London, 1987), 222, quoted in Barry Millington, 'Nuremberg trial: is there anti-Semitism in *Die Meistersinger*?', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3/3 (1991): 247–60, 257, and Weiner, *Richard Wagner*, 118.

34 Wagner, 'Judaism in Music', 31–2.

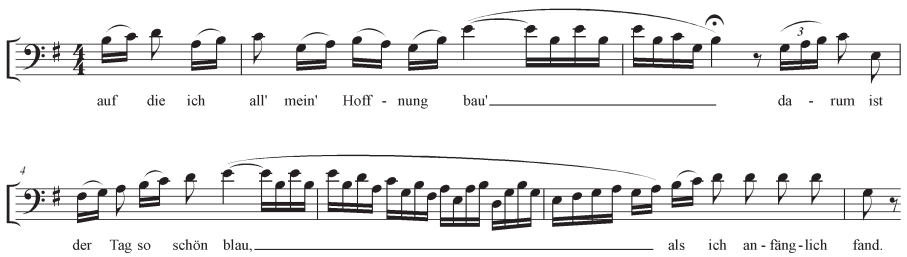
35 Wagner is apparently unaware of Klezmer: 'The only musical expression his own people can offer the Jewish composer is the ceremonial music of their worship of Jehovah.' Ibid., 32.

36 Wagner's immersion in *völkisch* ideology is evident as early as 'Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft' of 1849.

family ideology a bit far with the Volsungs, but it is confirmation that he regards traditional family values such as incest and cousin dating as greatly preferable to miscegenation. He warns against the latter in 'Erkenne dich selbst' (1880).

Weiner is adamant that he is not suggesting Wagner meant Beckmesser to be taken literally as a Jew, since for one thing he could not have held the position of Nuremberg's notary. While it is not my contention, either, that Beckmesser was to be seen as a Jew, there seems little doubt that Wagner was drawing upon anti-Jewish stereotyping to build a comic yet unsympathetic character. Humour can have either positive or negative effects. It can break chains, but it can make them, too. It can attack prejudice, but it can also reinforce prejudice. Jewish communities in Mannheim and Vienna recognized this and did protest.[37] In the next century, Adorno became one of the first critics to broaden such perceptions and articulate them as an opinion that 'all the rejects of Wagner's works are caricatures of Jews'.[38]

Ex. 1 Beckmesser's serenade, Act 2, *Die Meistersinger*



Example 1 is taken from the song with which Beckmesser chooses to serenade Eva, having spotted her at the window. While Beckmesser is singing, Hans Sachs adds a critical accompaniment of hammer blows as he works on a pair of shoes for the notary. What is the point of the coloratura? Is it because Wagner is parodying the melismas in synagogue chant, as Barry Millington believes?[39] Wagner thought of synagogue music as having a 'fixed form' and as being no longer 'animated by living feeling'.[40] It is surprising that Wagner had no knowledge of the changes in cantorial music initiated by Reform Judaism in the nineteenth century. Two modernizers were Salomon Sulzer in Vienna and Louis Lewandowski in Berlin, who could both be described as celebrity cantors. Wagner may have held stubbornly to his belief in an ossified music involving melismatic styles lacking in any musical sense, and that may be the point of Beckmesser's falling fourths, which drag out the phrase unnecessarily, extending a syllable to no apparent purpose.[41] But what of the argument that they are merely being used to signify and satirize the pedantic bore, which is surely how they function when Kothner

37 See Weiner, *Richard Wagner*, 123.

38 Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London, 1981), 23. Orig. pub. as *Versuch über Wagner* (Frankfurt am Main, 1952). He cites 'gold-grabbing Alberich' and 'locquacious Mime'.

39 Millington, 'Nuremberg Trial', 252–4.

40 Wagner, 'Judaism in Music', 32.

41 'The rhythms and melismata of the synagogue chant dominate his musical imagination in exactly the same way that instinctive knowledge of the modes and rhythms of our folk songs and dances shaped the creation of our vocal and instrumental music.'

reads the rules to Walther? A crucial distinction is that, in the case of Beckmesser, they do form a chain with other signifiers of race. In Act 3, the racialized caricaturing associated with Beckmesser is even heard in instrumental guise – especially, as Egon Voss pointed out, in the shape of a high, nasal bassoon.[42]

Anyone who looks for meaning in music at the level of individual signs is bound to run into difficulties, since those signs are likely to carry diverse or competing connotations. However, once signs can be linked together, once they are seen to relate to each other, the ground for interpretation is much firmer. All the same, meaning in music never moves beyond circumstantial evidence and, as such, is always open to disputation. I was reminded of the necessity of there being sufficient conditions upon which to base arguments concerning musical meaning by reading some student essays on the subject of Wagner and Jewish caricature. 'Yes, Mime and Alberich could be seen as Jewish caricatures,' wrote one student, 'but only if you look for it.' Another argued, 'No, there aren't Jewish caricatures, because Wagner was a control freak and would have put something such as "act like a Jew".' This student offered no explanation of what 'acting like a Jew' might mean. Is the singer expected to act like a Jew from personal observation? What personal experience of Jewishness does the non-Jewish singer draw upon? It seems far more likely that acting like a Jew would involve a range of stereotypical signs of Jewishness gleaned from literature and images, in other words a discursive construction of Jewishness. Does not 'act like a Jew' mean act in such a way that a *non*-Jewish audience is able to recognize the character as Jewish? In other words, it obliges the actor to draw upon representations of Jewishness that have become conventional, or upon the kinds of stereotypes that Bhabha regarded as a means of easy replication of reified forms of difference.[43] The student's failure to see that these are already constructed into the character of Beckmesser merely reveals an unfamiliarity with nineteenth-century anti-Jewish discourse.

The Celt

My second case study is of the Celt, and the way Celts supposedly compare to the English and Germans.[44] François-Joseph Fétis, in the preface to his *Histoire générale de la musique* (1869), stated that the history of music was 'inseparable from appreciation of the special properties belonging to the races that have cultivated it'.[45] Gilbert Webb, in a paper given to the Musical Association in Britain in 1891,

Ibid., 33. It should be pointed out that these melismas do have a purpose in lending emphasis to holy words or the vocables that substitute for them.

42 Egon Voss, *Studien zur Instrumentalmusik Richard Wagners* (Regensburg, 1970), 173–4, quoted (and translated) in Weiner, *Richard Wagner*, 124.

43 Homi K. Bhabha, 'The other question: difference, dissemination and the discourse of colonialism', in *Literature, Politics and Theory*, ed. Frances Barker (London, 1986), 148–72.

44 It was not only in music that the Celt was thought to reveal racial characteristics: Grant Allen saw the decorative side of Celtic art as a racial propensity, and Nigel Macneill attributed a perceived lack of Celtic grace of style in Sutherlandshire bard Rob Donn to the fact that the 'Teutonic element brought in by the Norse is stronger in the North'. Nigel Macneill, *The Literature of the Highlanders: Race, Language, Literature, Poetry and Music* (Stirling, 2nd edn 1929, orig. pub. 1892), 392. Macneill cites Grant Allen's article 'The Celt in English art', but without providing a source, 524–5.

45 Quoted in Pasler, 'The utility of musical instruments', 26.

was of a similar opinion, and believed he had found a method for establishing racial distinctions in music. These racial characteristics are displayed in folk music, which he regards (typically for the time) as synonymous with national music. He forestalls any arguments about a folk music and art music divide by claiming that the greatest works of the greatest composers 'breathe the same spirit as that which produced the folk-song'. It is particularly in war songs that the 'musical figures which point to the original racial fusions' are to be found, because a man acts from 'a sense of nationality, from a desire to sustain the reputation of his forefathers and secure the esteem of his fellow countrymen'.[46]

He singles out three characteristic figures: the dotted note, the triplet and the even-note pattern. These figures 'point to the original racial fusions'.[47] The dotted-note rhythm means different things, depending on whether the accent falls on the short note or the long note. In the former case, the rhythm known as the 'Scotch snap', he says it is

> the musical expression of great muscular strength allied with highly-developed nervous force – I mean rapidity of nervous action, or transmission of thought to the muscular mechanism, which proceeds from great determination of mind and quick decision. It is the language of relentless resolution, of a mind which once fixed on the acquisition of an object cares not what consequences may result to itself or others so long as the end in view is attained. These, I need hardly say, are the chief elements which form the characters of successful warriors and conquerors, such as the Kelts.[48]

In the discussion following his paper, the chairman, Mr W.H. Cummings, expresses his puzzlement that the 'Scotch snap' is not a characteristic figure for Irish Celts, but Webb offers no elucidation.[49]

If the accent falls on the longer note (for example, dotted quaver, semiquaver), it 'implies a less impulsive action but a greater staying power – determinative action proceeding from previous careful consideration – it is the expression of conviction based on experience and calculation' and is 'chiefly found in German music'.[50] He quotes the song 'Des Deutschen Vaterland'[51] as an example. Even if it is claimed that song rhythms are related to language accents, Webb maintains that those, too, are 'largely influenced by the temperament of the speakers'.[52]

The second characteristic figure is the irregular rhythmic decoration, such as the triplet, which for Webb is 'peculiarly grateful to the voice'; therefore, logic tells him it must come from the race that enjoyed singing. He finds it indicates a contemplative, introspective, sympathetic kind of temperament, and he mentions the Welsh. He also contrasts the 'irritating' Highland bagpipe with the Welsh harp, claiming the one originated in dance and the other in song.[53] However, irregular rhythmic decorations also develop idiomatic forms in non-vocal music, and the

46 F. Gilbert Webb, 'The foundations of national music', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 17th session, 1890–91 (London, 1891), 113–31, plus discussion, 132–5, 122.
47 Ibid., 122.
48 Ibid., 122.
49 Ibid., discussion, 133.
50 Ibid., 123.
51 Words by Ernst Moritz Arndt (1813), set to music by Gustav Reichardt in 1825.
52 Webb, 'Foundations', 123.
53 Ibid., 124.

distinction Webb makes would begin to collapse if the irregularities of the grace-note patterns in Scottish pipe music were taken into account.

The third figure, one employing notes of equal value and larger intervals, he considers to be exemplified by the English style. That, according to his theory, must relate to English temperament; and so he begins by summarizing what he sees as the character of the majority of Englishmen – at the same time, appealing craftily to the English subject position of his audience:

> A well balanced mind which regards everything in an intensely practical light and which submits everything to the question: 'What good will that do to my pecuniary or social position?' We hate display. All extravagance of language, dress, and gesture; we look upon the impulsive man with suspicion and upon the exaggerator with disgust, and regard enthusiasm as dangerous; we fear to let ourselves 'go' lest we should excite ridicule; in a word, we lack 'passion.' On the other hand, we are magnanimous and chivalrous, whether the object be worthy or no; emotional on social subjects, patriotic, and home-loving. What should be the music of such a people? Just what it is; good, honest, bold, straightforward strains, rich in melody, and breathing strong, healthy, human affection or simple-hearted gaiety, but innocent alike of exaggerated sentimentality, intellectual subtleties, or maddening mysticism.[54]

He then lurches back to the relevance of his third musical figure in this context. English peasants, he tells his audience – as if they would all be convinced peasants were still readily to be found in the England of the 1890s – tend towards a uniform stress in pronouncing words and syllables (perhaps he was thinking of the drawn out delivery of a phrase such as the Yorkshire expletive 'ee-by-gum'). English people in general are careless of correct accentuation, he opines; so much is evident from their hymn singing (perhaps, here, he was thinking of the opening lines of 'Abide with Me'). Lots of notes of equal value are therefore characteristically English.

Whatever one thinks of Webb's classificatory method, the racial theory that separated the Celts from the English was not unanimously accepted. Matthew Arnold argued in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) that there were racial and cultural links. He drew attention to the fact that people tend to remain in a conquered country, 'yet insensibly getting mixed with their conquerors, and their blood entering into the composition of a new people'.[55] He speculates that the reason the English are so prone to embarrassment is 'because two natures are mixed in them, and natures which pull them such different ways'.[56] Arnold, however, does believe physiological evidence will be found for his theory, and he goes along with received wisdom about square-headed Germans, round-headed Gaels and the oval-headed Welsh.[57] He also believes there are characteristics, such as sentimentality, that are natural to the Celts, who are 'keenly sensitive to joy and sorrow', possessing a temperament that aspires ardently after life, but which, being so impressionable, suffers more downs than ups.[58] Summing up the Celtic

54 Ibid., 125.

55 Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London, 1900), 75. Orig. pub. 1867).

56 Ibid., 112. One is reminded of a remark made in an interview by comedian John Cleese; he declared that only an English person feels the need to say 'sorry' before asking someone to pass the salt at dinner.

57 Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, 79–80.

58 Ibid., 84.

genius as 'more airy and unsubstantial … than the German',[59] he paves the way for the notion of the dreamy Celt and the earth-bound Saxon that became a stereotype of the 'Celtic Twilight' movement and is still around today (currently, a favourite term for Celtic music is 'haunting' – which seems to give unfair prominence to the music of Clannad or Enya). Arnold also manages to anticipate Webb: 'All that emotion can do in music the Celt has done; the very soul of emotion breathes in the Scotch and Irish airs; but with all this power of feeling, what has the Celt, so eager for emotion that he has not patience for science, effected in music, to be compared with what the less emotional German, steadily developing his musical feeling with the science of a Sebastian Bach or a Beethoven, has effected?'[60] This is not entirely fair, since there is no consideration of the *Ceol Mor* (great music) and *Ceol Beag* (little music) distinction, the bardic tradition, or *piobaireachd* (the 'classical' music of the bagpipe). In spite of all this, Arnold adds presciently, 'Europe tends constantly to become more and more one community, and we tend to become Europeans instead of merely Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians'.[61] The consequence is that artworks flow throughout and are imitated throughout Europe.

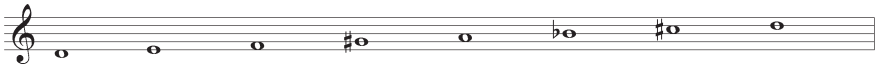
Ironically, for all Arnold's polarization of Celt and German, biological evidence has proved to be another matter entirely: DNA test results released in 2003 revealed more Celtic DNA in Germany than in Ireland. Moreover, 'mainland Scotland was not appreciably more Ancient Briton (Celtic) than southern England'.[62] University College London's DNA research supported Arnold's arguments that Celts in England were not entirely displaced by later invaders. However, Arnold had changed his mind about Celtic influence on English culture in *Culture and Anarchy* of 1869, arguing instead that English culture was indebted to Greek and Jewish cultures. In this book, which proved influential, he became one of the first to see culture as political, enmeshed with questions of race, class and nation.

The Gypsy

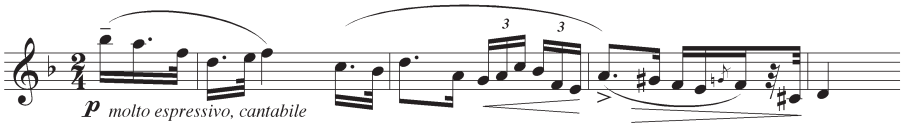
Webb also makes a reference to Gypsies, which is our next short case study. He accepts that Gypsies have become the representatives of Hungarian music, but having referred to their supposed origins in Hindustan, he claims that all that the Gypsies did for Hungarian music 'was to corrupt it by adding a series of those embroideries so dear to the Indian mind'.[63] He does perceive the importance of improvisation to the music, which others fail to notice or comment upon; however, he takes it as an illustration of 'passions unbridled by social conventions and old-world musical forms', which in his opinion 'often reflects the state of mind which mistakes madness for strength and incoherence for sublimity'.[64] In the discussion after Webb's paper, a Mr Jacques agrees that the 'Hungarian scale' played by Webb sounded Indian.[65] Webb did not give a source for the scale, but it is the one Liszt

59 Ibid., 85.
60 Ibid., 86–7.
61 Ibid., 136.
62 Nicola Cook, *Viking Genetics Survey Results*, www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/bloodofthevikings/genetics_results_03.shtml (accessed 6 Nov. 2004).
63 Webb, 'Foundations', 129.
64 Ibid., 130.
65 Ibid., discussion, 133.

Ex. 2a Liszt's 'Gypsy scale'



Ex. 2b Liszt's *Hungaria*, bars 79–83



included in his book *The Gipsy in Music*.[66] (See Ex. 2a.) I can vouch for its being an exhausting and frustrating task to find an example of a traditional Hungarian tune that uses the notes of this scale (and no others), and this is also true of the passages in Liszt in which it can be heard (for example, in the symphonic poem *Hungaria* of 1854, see Ex. 2b).

Liszt, in his *Gipsy* book, contrasts the nomadic character of the Gypsies with the 'plodding, sedentary character of the Magyars'.[67] The Magyars, he tells us, were philosophical and highly civilized and, therefore, it 'cannot be the Magyar race' that created a music 'which tells only of extreme sentiments, disordered instincts and extravagant desires'. Yet Hungary adopted this music and, in Liszt's words, 'mixed up its existence with her own, that at last the difference in their blood was no longer distinguishable'.[68] In these remarks we may perceive support for Robert Young's argument that theories of race are covert theories of desire since they focus so strongly on questions of sexuality and interracial sexual relations.[69] There is no space here to elaborate upon the topic of 'the desire of the Other', but I might mention the refrain reiterated almost ad nauseam throughout Balfe's *Bohemian Girl*: 'In the Gipsies' life you read the life that all would like to lead.'

Liszt devotes the first section of Chapter 28 to a consideration of Gypsy and Indian music, subscribing to the hypothesis that Gypsies came originally from the foot of the Himalayas. Although he acknowledges that no comparative research has been undertaken of Gypsy and Indian music, he remarks upon the scalic intervals and unexpected modulations of their music, and suggests that, despite the passage of time and the influence of Western culture and climate, 'sufficient character remains to fix the Oriental stamp upon their entire art'.[70] Later in the chapter he complains about musical editors who have presumed to 'correct' intervals, modulations and discords in Gypsy music before publication. They were, he says, under the impression they were 'purifying', but were actually displaying 'ignorance of the whole secret of Bohemian art'.[71]

Bartók had no time for the Gypsy music Liszt so admired, and thought Gypsies appropriated and deformed Hungarian folk music, appealed to those with low

66 Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music*, trans. Edwin Evans (1881; reprinted London, 1960), 301. Originally published as *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859).

67 Ibid., 272.

68 Ibid., 273.

69 Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London, 1995).

70 Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music*, 287.

71 Ibid., 324–5.

artistic sensibilities, and were content to play whatever the customer wanted.[72] These ideas form a striking parallel to Wagner's opinion that Jews turned art into a commodity, regarding it as a field wherein there was 'much profit to be reaped',[73] and that a Jewish composer such as Meyerbeer profited from the 'confused musical taste' of a section of society who use art as means of 'diversion from boredom'.[74] Katie Trumpener sees Bartók's initial nationalist interest in folk music as 'fuelled partly by racism, specifically by a fear of both Gypsy and Jewish influences on Hungarian cultural life', and she makes a case that his ethnomusicological research was 'framed, in problematic ways, by early twentieth-century understandings of race'.[75] Julie Brown, too, has discussed the shift in Bartók's attitude to Gypsy music in the 1920s to 1940s, and the indebtedness of his work to discourses of race, something noted as early as 1932 by German musicologist Heinrich Möller.[76] Bartók never seems to have been aware that neighbouring countries, such as Slovakia, might not have been as keen on Hungarian nationalism as he was – having suffered from years of oppression and 'Magyarization' campaigns. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the shrinking of Hungary's borders, Bartók was outraged by Czech nationalism. When he argued against the idea of racial purity in music (as in his essay 'Racial Purity and Music' of 1942), it was not because he did not believe in race; it was because he believed music would stagnate without the possibility of assimilating foreign elements. Yet he did believe in cultural essences rather than cultural constructions, and so, despite his misgivings about racial purity and music, he was drawn irresistibly to isolated villages as the only source of truly satisfying material. But how often does that music prove impervious to the outside world? Having conducted similar fieldwork into Basque culture, Bruno Nettl wrote with surprise of its indebtedness to Northern Spain and South-western France rather than to ancient Basque traditions.[77]

The African American

In taking a brief look at the way racialized thinking about music affected the African American, I am going to focus on a single genre: the spiritual, or gospel song. In 1903 W.E.B. Du Bois believed that spirituals, as a 'Negro and Caucasian

72 See Béla Bartók, *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (London, 1976), 29, 206, and Katie Trumpener, 'Béla Bartók and the rise of comparative ethnomusicology: nationalism, race purity, and the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian empire', in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Radano and Bohlman, 403–34, 410–12.

73 Wagner, 'What is German?', 47. This fits the stereotype of the 'rapacious Jew', which is how he describes Meyerbeer in a letter to his niece Franziska Wagner, Zurich, 13 October 1852, in William Ashton Ellis, *Family Letters of Richard Wagner*, introduction and notes by John Deathridge (London, 1991), 184–7, 185.

74 Wagner, 'Judaism in Music', 36.

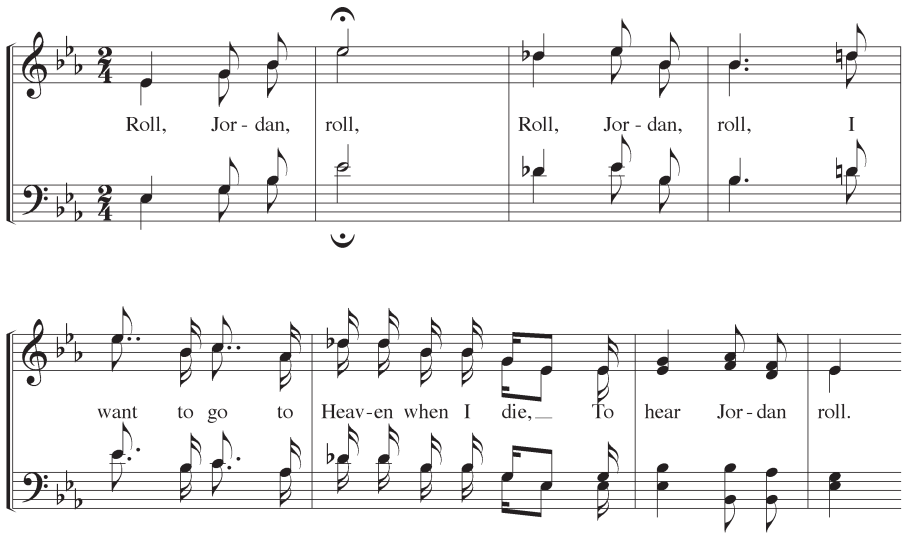
75 Trumpener, 'Béla Bartók', 406. Derision for Jewish-Gypsy bands was not new. Wagner referred scornfully to Brahms as 'jüdischen Czardasausspieler'; see Jonathan Bellman, '"Noble Pathways of the National": C19 Views of National Music and Their C20 Descendants', *Pendragon Review*, 1/2 (2001): 50.

76 Julie Brown, 'Bartók, the Gypsies, and hybridity in music', in *Western Music and Its Others*, ed. Born and Hesmondhalgh, 119–42, see 120–1 and 127–32.

77 Bruno Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1973), 116; quoted in Malcolm Chapman, 'Thoughts on Celtic Music', in *Ethnicity*, ed. Stokes, 29–44, 43.

mix', could be seen as a model for an amalgamated American culture.[78] However, Zora Hurston, writing on the 'characteristics of Negro expression' thirty years later, criticized the Fisk Jubilee Singers (who had done so much to disseminate the spirituals) for not offering a 'genuine presentation of Negro songs' to white audiences, and complained about the inauthenticity of 'Glee Club style' performances of spirituals.[79]

Ex. 3 'Roll Jordan, Roll', from G.D. Pike, *The Jubilee Singers* **(London, 1874), 171**



Whether or not one chooses to describe the recording of 'Roll Jordan, Roll' made by a quartet of Fisk University Jubilee singers in 1909 as 'glee club style',[80] there is no doubt that the bold vocal octaves of the refrain and the flattened seventh in the melody add a sense of cultural difference (see Ex. 3). Is this an example of the dreaded 'hybridity'? Are the singers treating the glee club to the 'ruse of recognition'? Somehow, I think not; and it was clearly not how Du Bois heard them. But it is always difficult to know why some musical features that suggest otherness are retained while others are, as it were, 'Europeanized'.[81] Paul Gilroy

78 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, 1965), see especially Chapter 14. Orig. pub. 1903, also online pub. at www.bartleby.com [1999]. See also the discussion of Du Bois' musical arguments in Nicholas M. Evans, *Writing Jazz: Race, Nationalism, and Modern Culture in the 1920s* (New York, 2000), 63–73.

79 Zora Neale Hurston, 'The characteristics of Negro expression', in *Negro*, ed. Nancy Cunard (New York, 1970), 31. Orig. pub. 1933; quoted in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, 1993), 92.

80 Re-released on *Fisk University Jubilee Singers*, Vol. 1 (1909–1911), Document Records, DOCD-5533 (1997), track 5.

81 John Knox Bokwe, a South African black composer, presents another example of this kind of problem in his 'Plea for Africa' of c. 1894. Towards the end of the verse he writes a B♮ passing note of a minim's duration in the bass against a B♭ chord. Because we are so familiar with this kind of dissonance in jazz and blues, we may hear it as a marker of cultural difference within what sounds, for the most part, like a Victorian nonconformist sacred song for soloist and choir. Grant E. Olwage, however, is convinced it is a mistake Bokwe

has remarked that specific forms of double consciousness are required by those striving to be both European and black, largely as a result of racist and nationalist discourses.[82]

The most persuasive examples, for me, of the 'ruse of recognition' seem to be found in the cakewalk, ragtime, and early jazz. Following Henry Gates, Samuel Floyd and others, the usual term to describe this type of ironic quotation is 'signifyin' '. It involves a theoretical model derived from African folklore and cultural practices in black communities that there is no time to elaborate upon here.[83] Briefly, it relies on a deliberate indirectness in communication, rhetorical games, imitation, pastiche and parody. An argument can be made, for example, that ragtime signifies on the European march. To perceive that particular 'ruse of recognition', and locate elements of parodic critique, it helps to contrast a ragtime march with a strict Prussian military march.

The American Indian

Finally, and most briefly of all, I turn to the American Indian. If you are looking for a way in which race became commodified as entertainment in the nineteenth century, then you will find it readily in the American theatre, with its Indian melodramas, Irish dramas, and so forth. It was the stage Indian that influenced 'Indian' devices in concert music of the late nineteenth century, according to Michael Pisani, who concluded from a survey of such devices that they 'originated on the stage and largely remained there' until composers such as MacDowell brought them to the concert hall in the 1890s.[84] 'Indian plays' were popular in North America from 1830 on; at first they relied on the Noble Savage trope, but in the 1850s, parodies and burlesques had turned the Indian into an object of ridicule. Outside of these representations, however, Native American cultures continued, did not stagnate after the Indian Wars as some may have thought, and are very much alive today. Native American musicians provide examples of the process of adaptability and change within their cultural traditions. The Tohono O'odham people of Southern Arizona, for example, play dance music of Mexican and European origin, something they have been doing since the end of the nineteenth century (see Ex. 4).[85]

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would have wished to correct: 'Music and Post/Colonialism: The Dialectics of Choral Culture on a South African Frontier' (PhD diss., Rhodes University, 2003).

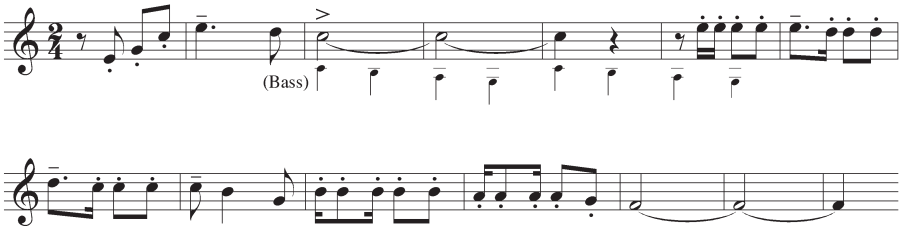
82 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 1. The concept of 'double consciousness' is clearly indebted to Du Bois' thoughts on the 'two-ness' of the African American; see *The Souls of Black Folk*, 3–4.

83 See Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York, 1987), and Samuel A. Floyd, Jr, 'Ring shout! Literary studies, historical studies, and black music inquiry', in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', and Slam Dunking*, ed. Gena Dagel Caponi (Amherst, MA, 1991), 135–56 (reprinted from *Black Music Research Journal*, 11/2 [1991], 265-88).

84 '"I'm an Indian too:" creating Native American identities in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music', in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston, 1998), 218-57, 231. Pisani's informative essay is largely concerned with concert music. He presents a summary of 'the standard language for the musical depiction of Indians' on pages 229–30.

85 This music has come to be known as *waila*, and can be heard played by the Native American band Southern Scratch on their album *Em-we-hejed* ('For all of you'), Canyon Records, CR-8097.

Ex. 4 Transcribed from 'Cuatro Vidas Polka', played by Southern Scratch, a Native American group



Undoubtedly, such music would not have appealed to those folkloristic researchers who had ambitions to establish ethnic essences in music. Some uses of music, such as victory powwows and healing songs, remain more narrowly localized, but the diversity of genres and styles found among the different Native American peoples increased rather than shrank or disappeared during the twentieth century. Today, Native American musicians will be found performing in all popular styles, or fusing them with their own traditions.[86]

Conclusion

What status does the concept of race hold for us now? In June 2004, an obituary of Ray Charles declared, 'His work had elements of every idiom: it was pan-American music'.[87] This is pan-American in a different sense to Victor Herbert's *Pan Americana* of 1902, with its separate Native-American, African-American and Spanish-American themes. Yet racial thinking still appears in musical judgements; the *Gramophone* magazine for July 2004 contained the comment: 'The Talich Quartet are naturally attuned to Dvořák by *birth* [my emphasis] and experience.'[88]

Rather than relating national music styles to race, it would be much more convincing to relate them to language. A research project that made a comparative study of recordings of English and French music and speech found that variations of rhythm and pitch in language could be related to the music composed by those who spoke that language. Aniruddh Patel, reporting on these findings in November 2004, said, 'Composers, like every other person in their culture, learn the patterns of their language and it's latent in their minds, so when they compose, they have those patterns to draw on'.[89] There seems to be nothing so surprising in this. Indeed, the links between language and music are evident in an interim

86 Some examples may be mentioned: the country style of Bill Miller, the jazz-influenced wooden flautist R. Carlos Nakai, the Cajun style of Redbone, the folky singer-guitarist Sharon Burch, the rappers WithOut Rezervation, the gospel-like style of Walela, the Latin-influenced trio Burning Sky, and the mixture of pop, country and traditional in the songs written and performed by the internationally esteemed Joanne Shenandoah.

87 Tony Russell, 'Obituary: Ray Charles', *The Guardian* (Sat. 12 Jun. 2004): 27. Charles even showed an interest in country music, rare for black musicians.

88 Ivan March, 'Intimate, inimitable', *The Gramophone* 82 (Jul. 2004): 63.

89 Aniruddh Patel, speaking at the Acoustical Society of America meeting at the Neurosciences Institute in San Diego, 19 Nov. 2004. Quoted in Ian Sample, 'Great composers scored on language', *The Guardian* (Sat., 20 Nov. 2004): 13.

report that same year from another research project (a study of children's musical development and its impact on literacy and numeracy): 'children pick up the melody of language long before they recognize individual words'.[90]

The sense of national identity created by building a literate 'high culture' out of a dialect was achieved in music by 'reviving' (and often inventing) national folk dance and song traditions. In the first half of the twentieth century, radio was an important medium of dissemination of 'national' music.[91] Music thus continued to play an important hegemonic role in dominant classifications of race, nationality, and identity. Martin Stokes cites, as an example of music's complicity with the violence that sometimes enforces those categorizations, the use of music to patrol the boundaries between 'Irish' and 'British' identities in Northern Ireland.[92]

The Civil Rights struggle in America resulted in a general adoption of the term 'black', but it now presents problems. It essentializes blackness, whereas Stuart Hall asks us to recognize that 'the question of the black subject cannot be represented without reference to the dimensions of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity'.[93] He sees a change in the politics of representation, from the simple reversals of the 1970s – make the good guy in the film black – to the complexities of a film such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*.[94] The title of a book published in 1990, *Black Music in Britain*, now seems inadequate as a label for the cultural diversity it contains, which ranges from reggae to bhangra.[95]

There now seem to be two contrary tendencies; one moves in the direction of multiplying ethnicities, and the other is for blurring distinctions. In January 2004, the UK Office for National Statistics issued a new manual, requiring official forms to collect data on nationality as well as ethnicity.[96] A spokesperson from the Commission for Racial Equality responded by saying, 'Welsh is an ethnic group in the same way as Caribbean is'.[97] But here, it seems, nationality has already collapsed into ethnicity, so that 'Afro-Caribbean Welsh' becomes a kind of mixed ethnicity rather than meaning Afro-Caribbean ethnicity and Welsh nationality. Greeks don't have this problem, since in modern Greek *ethnikos* means national. Unfortunately, this also links to the 'new racism' that was identified in the later

90 See Wendy Berliner, 'Not crawling but dancing', *Education Guardian* (16 Nov. 2004): 6–7, 6. The research took place at the Howden Sure Start Centre, Wallsend, North Tyneside.

91 See Stokes's discussion of the importance of radio in Afghanistan and Turkey, *Ethnicity*, 11–12.

92 Stokes, *Ethnicity*, 8–10. See also *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, 1983).

93 Stuart Hall, 'New ethnicities', *Black Film, British Cinema*, ICA Documents 7 (London, 1989), excerpted in Ashcroft *et al*., *Post-colonial Studies Reader*, 223–7, 226. Two years before Hall's essay, Paul Gilroy had stressed the necessity of studying the relation between the terms 'race' and 'class' in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London, 2002). Orig. pub. London, 1987.

94 More recently, filmmaker Gurinder Chadha, in discussing *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*, has said, 'My work is about not making race matter, but making people matter'. Quoted in Stephen Armstrong, 'The Bennets from Amritsar', *The Sunday Times, Culture* (18 Jul. 2004): 6–7, 7.

95 Paul Oliver, ed., *Black Music in Britain* (Milton Keynes, 1990).

96 *Ethnic Group Statistics: A Guide for the Collection and Classification of Ethnicity Data* (London, 2004).

97 Quoted in John Elliot and David Robertson, 'English, Scots and Welsh are now officially ethnic', *The Sunday Times* (11 Jan. 2004): 7.

twentieth century by scholars such as Martin Baker, who saw conflict emerging along cultural lines, with the linking of ideas of 'race' to nationality.[98] In the early twenty-first century, we may be witnessing a *new* 'new racism' in which religion is a key factor in one group's hatred for another, and in which fear of Islamic fundamentalist supra-nationalism overtakes earlier fears of fascistic nationalisms (despite the absence of an overarching Muslim authority or single formulation of Islamic orthodoxy).[99]

The other direction has become known as 'ethnic ambiguity' or EA. A newspaper article in January 2004 cited, among its many examples of this phenomenon, Beyoncé Knowles dying her hair blonde, Christina Aguilera appearing as a 'Bollywood goddess' on a magazine cover, and Jennifer Lopez as an Asian princess in an advertisement.[100] In the UK, more than a million young people identified themselves as of no race or of more than one race in the census of 2001. The difficulty many people have trying to define their race or ethnicity has been compounded by the growth of an urban culture of music, fashion and clubbing that crosses ethnic boundaries. On top of that, in an age of digital photography, with its ease of image manipulation, ethnic ambiguity is bound to increase.[101] Many people are defining themselves by what they do – at work and during leisure – rather than by their ethnic background. But then others are multiplying diasporic identities: a Welsh diaspora, a Cornish diaspora – probably, by now, a Yorkshire diaspora and a Geordie diaspora. The current contestation over 'ethnicity' was foreseen by Stuart Hall in his essay 'New Ethnicities' of 1989. There, he envisaged an 'ethnicity of the margins', a recognition that we all speak from particular cultural positions and experiences, without being contained by them or needing to displace other people's positions.[102] Edward Said, a few years later, was of a similar mind, insisting that labels 'like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting-points'.[103]

Let us return to one of the case studies, Celtic music, and assess what our perceptions are now. Martin Stokes remarks of 'Celtic music' in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that it is 'always potentially easy, participatory, and crosses national borders'[104] because, beyond the binarisms of 'romantic Celt' vs. 'pragmatic Saxon' and periphery vs. centre, its content is varied and loosely defined. Yet Malcolm Chapman writes, 'I have, in conversation with "Celtic musicians", been told that the freedom of Celtic singing was a manifestation of the more general freedom from rules that characterizes the Celts'.[105] The argument

98 See Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 32–4.

99 The description 'Asian' has become disliked by some British Asians who would prefer to be identified by religion (for example, as 'British Hindu' or 'British Sikh'). This was a matter explored in 'Don't call me Asian: cultural differences', BBC Radio 4 (16 Jan. 2005). Several speakers said that they wished to avoid being mistaken for Muslims.

100 John Arlridge, 'Forget black, forget white. The future is Generation EA', *The Observer* (4 Jan. 2004): 19.

101 See David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York, 1995), for pioneering exposition of the argument that ethnicity is now a matter of affiliation and borders between ethnicities no longer hold.

102 Hall, 'New ethnicities', 226–7.

103 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1994), 407.

104 Stokes, *Ethnicity*, 6.

105 Malcolm Chapman, 'Thoughts on Celtic music', 39. For a full-length study, see the same author's *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (London, 1992).

assumes a racial element, presenting this supposed parallel as evidence of a Celtic essence, and in this it is no different to Webb's arguments. It must be stressed that Chapman himself does not commit these errors. It is surprising to find, then, that in the context of Marjory Kennedy Frazer's arrangements of Hebridean songs, Chapman remarks that 'pentatonic tunes of great beauty are de-natured by their passage through a system based on a twelve-note tempered scale'.[106] This amounts to a 'genetic modification' argument: science, in the form of equal temperament, has allowed *natural* pentatonicism to be altered. Music does not have a nature; even selecting five notes from the harmonic series to create melodies is cultural work. One might prefer pentatonic melodies to be unaccompanied, or accompanied only by drones and/or pentatonic chord shapes, but other listeners may not be unduly troubled by the presence of a leading note in a dominant chord accompanying a pentatonic tune. The problem, I surmise, is that Kennedy Frazer's arrangements carry connotations of the middle-class drawing room. When music takes on class associations, a new apparatus of evaluation is often brought into play. There are those who believe as firmly in the existence of a proletarian essence in music as others believe in a racial essence.

So, if modern Celtic music is not to be seen as once pure but now genetically modified, what is the alternative? I suggest it is to be welcomed as one of many examples of ethnically ambiguous music. Consider: the guitar is taken from folk pop (and what is commonly known as 'Irish tuning' [DADEAE from low to high strings] has been credited to English folk guitarist Martin Carthy[107]), and the banjo has come from the minstrel show via the dance band (and retuned so that each string sounds an octave lower than the corresponding string on a violin). The fiddle is traditional, but the pipes have changed. Many 'Celtic musicians' use Highland pipes, but the pitch of the drones is usually sharpened (old Highland pipes have drones pitched midway between a modern A and B♭). Those that use Uillean pipes have tended to discard the type that survived in Irish dance bands of New York (pitched in D) for revived forms of older instruments. The accordion, from Italy via France, is often regarded as a Scottish instrument, particularly for Scottish country dancing, and the melodeon is popular in the Western Isles. I could go on, mentioning some of the many Irish and Scottish songs that originated as nineteenth-century commercial ballads in London and New York, but the point is, I think, made. The sound of the Celtic jam session in pubs and bars all over Europe and in North America is ethnically ambiguous and only loosely suggestive of social class.

For more than two hundred years the fiction of race has confused us and distracted us. But denying the philosophical and scientific premises of race is not the same as denying that race has a reality in the day-to-day lives of ethnic minorities. Such a recognition may create values and positions that are logical, though seemingly contradictory. For example, the philosopher Karl Popper stressed his Jewish origin to show sympathy with oppressed minorities, but said he could not call himself a Jew since he did not believe in race.[108] In like manner, some of those who currently give no scientific credit to the idea of race have argued that it has to be kept on the agenda in order to fight racism. In contrast,

106 Chapman, 'Thoughts on Celtic music', 39.

107 See Paul de Grae, *Traditional Irish Guitar* (Cork, 1996).

108 Information given without source in David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker: The Story of a Ten-Minute Argument Between Two Great Philosophers* (London, 2001), 108.

Gilroy has urged that 'action against racial hierarchies can proceed more effectively when it has been purged of any lingering respect for the idea of "race"'.[109] I want, then, to end by stressing that people make *cultural* and not *racial* choices. Those possessing a paler skin tone do not have their capacity for singing the blues genetically reduced; that, indeed, would be open to Frantz Fanon's charge of epidermalization, the term he used for the practice of attributing meaning to bodies via their skin colour.[110] Musical practices differ because they are a consequence of living in and absorbing the cultural experience of different communities. They are not 'in the blood'. The racial theories that developed in the nineteenth century have no credibility today, and serve no present purpose for musicologists other than that of providing insight into the historical and cultural contexts of musical reception and the development of the anthropology of music.

109 Gilroy, *Against Race*, 13.

110 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York, 1967). Orig. pub. as *Peau noir, masques blancs* (Paris, 1952).