Regarding Rockism, Part I: Black Truths and Noble Savages

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Some Things Last A Long Time [orig. Daniel Johnston]

by Graham Johnson

I. Introduction

Controversy over Lana Del Rey has centered around everything from her singing ability and views on feminism to her interview last year with the Guardian in which she opined on musicians who have died young. ("Glamorous?" she was asked. "Ummmm, yeah.") But within music criticism circles, one of the primary topics of conversation has been her authenticity as an artist and performer. Resident New York Mag and Pitchfork contributor Nitsuh Abebe shrewdly notes in his analysis of such discussions that "Different genres have totally different rules about the ways in which artists are supposed to be imaginative" versus honest and sincere. Abebe contends that pop music typically operates more theatrically than earnestly, treating imagination "roughly the same way stage musicals do: You can take up the trappings of any aesthetic you like, roving anywhere through style and history, costume, and theme." But rock music, Abebe argues, despite allowing significantly more leeway than pop in the realm of musical experimentation, holds a greater expectation of personal consistency and genuineness in its artists themselves. Rock critics and listeners, therefore, traditionally approach music with the belief that the singer or musician is an artist rather than an entertainer, and that an authenticity of self should be the "central ideology" of any artist's music. Pop audiences meanwhile take an opposite approach, evaluating music as a performance and its musicians as performers. Arguments over Del Rey's bona fides therefore, Abebe argues, stem not from disagreements over whether show biz entertainer Lana Del Rey is in fact the same person as real-life Lizzy Grant — that there exists a massive discrepancy between her two personas is abundantly clear — but whether it's important that said discrepancy exists.

Within contemporary rock-critic communities, definitions of exactly what constitutes authenticity or genuineness are hotly contested, and the terms' legitimacy or relevance as part of a critical framework even more so. Yet it was only two decades ago that "rockism" stood at its arguable peak of cultural influence — rockism being primarily the idea that (1) great art requires authenticity of expression (2) that rock music is an inherently more authentic mode of expression than fellow genres, and that therefore (3) rock deserves (and held, for some

thirty-odd years) status as the top of the popular music critical hierarchy. Rockism is the tendency to, as critic Kelefa Sanneh wrote in a well-known 2004 New York Times piece, "idoliz[e] the authentic old legend... while mocking the latest pop star; to lioniz[e] punk while barely tolerating disco." Though rockist views have been widely challenged and supplanted in the critical community over the past few decades (especially by the rise of so-called "poptimism"), some of its central tenets have perniciously slipped through the cracks, maintaining a stronghold of influence in popular and critical thought. Perhaps the most damaging of these is its model of evaluating and conferring judgments of authenticity — its specific archetypes of genuineness, naturalness, and honesty, as well as its worshiping of these characteristics as if of the utmost importance.

Rockism itself was no sudden apparition or occult conjuring but the culmination of a long historical pursuit of authenticity in multiple Western cultures. A hybrid of "essentialist" and "relative"/"personal"/"expressive" approaches, rockism holds that there both exists certain "absolutely" and inherently authentic cultures, peoples, races, lifestyles, and personal histories which are, by their nature, closer to an organic way of living. (Note: this "essentialist" model of authenticity is modeled after the Platonic idea that certain things have attributes and characteristics which are inherent to them. It is unrelated to, and not to be confused with, Timothy Taylor's conception of "essentialized" cultural authenticity briefly mentioned in the 1997 book *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*, most notably referenced by Allan Moore for his 2002 essay "Authenticity as Authentication" in *Popular Music*.) On the other hand, rockism simultaneously champions (to oft-contradictory effect) authenticity of expression — that regardless of your lifestyle or your cultural origins, the image you present as an artist must be based in an honest/genuine self rather than being a falsified or contrived representation. Jon Cruz makes a similar differentiation between models in his ground-breaking book on black spirituals, *Culture in the Margins*, referencing an "external" authenticity which might be found "in the body of a genuine social subject such as an author of a slave narrative or the black singers of spirituals" as well as an "internal" authenticity cultivated through "a self-reflexive recognition and cultivation of one's genuine pathos." This essay, the first of three on authenticity, rockism, and contemporary music criticism, will attempt to trace the origins and development of both these approaches (essentialist and expressive) to authenticity, as well as analyzing how they historically and contemporarily interact with one another.

II. Essentialist Authenticity and the European Tradition

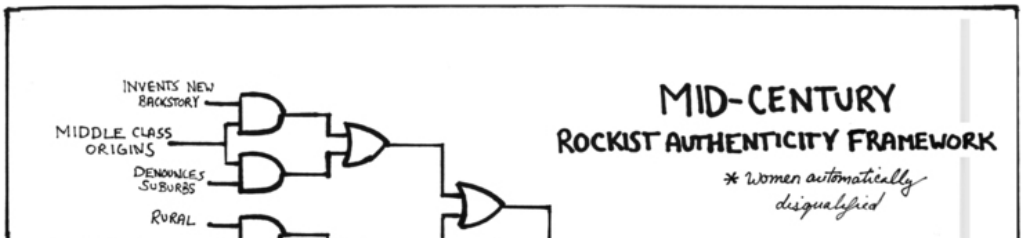
"These people are wild in the same sense that fruits are, produced by nature, alone, in her ordinary way. Indeed, in that land, it is we who refuse to alter our artificial ways and reject the common order that ought rather to be called wild, or savage. In them the most natural virtues and abilities are alive and vigorous, whereas we have bastardized them and adopted them solely to our corrupt taste. Even so, the flavor and delicacy of some of the wild fruits from those countries is excellent, even to our taste, better than our cultivated ones. After all, it would hardly be reasonable that artificial breeding should be able to outdo our great and powerful mother, Nature." —Michel de Montaigne, "On Cannibals"

I Am The Blues
Muddy Waters

Essentialism views authenticity of an individual as absolute rather than relative, as primarily rooted in his class or race's perceived "closeness to human nature"; it understands his relationship with truth as natural rather than personal, inherent rather than decided, and birthed rather than chosen; it is "essence…fixed, self-identical, and persistent over time." **[1]** This European-American model of authenticity seeks in the pastoral and the natural a nostalgic escape from the perceived artificiality and 'phoniness' of modern urban life, propping up as an alternative for said phoniness an imagined agrarian utopia of the past. A belief in modern artificiality and a lost human sincerity is well-ingrained in European thought: Rousseau, as Lionel Trilling would write, espoused the idea that "what destroys our authenticity is society,"**[2]** and Mike Daley notes in his essay "Why Do Whites Sing Black?" that European fetishization of an organic "Other" comes from a nostalgic pull to find a culture "before the fall," removed from the poison of modern society. As such, slaves in the 18th and 19th centuries were often seen by whites — obviously incongruously with reality — as being liberated from social constructs and conventions, in touch with their authentically 'primitive' tendencies. (In conceptualizing this enormous opposition between imagined and real, Gil Scott-Heron's West-popularized "freedom / free-doom" dichotomy comes to mind in appropriately summarizing both sides of the divide: the imposed white narrative of blacks as freed from social structures on one hand; on the other, the darker reality of blacks historically being the members of society most enchained by said social structures). In this school of European thought, cultures and people (such as the bluesmen) perceived as being closer to the imagined past utopia were accordingly imbued with an implied authenticity of existence.

Notions of essentialist authenticity have been historically plagued by (or perhaps more accurately, rooted in) racism and classism, stereotyping large groups of people and entire ethnicities in order to fulfill the nostalgic longings and romanticized falsehoods of European aristocracy. Such evaluations have also historically been central to Western traditions of artistic discourse, from English bucolic poetry to classical symphonies' appropriation of folk melodies and motifs. Christopher Lasch in critical-gargantuan *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* notes that historically, the appeal of peasanthood was been rooted in a pervasive feeling by European aristocrats of "artifice, intrigue, and insincerity" of their own courts and, contrastingly, a perceived "artless" honesty of "shepherds and milkmaids."**[3]** Given this precedent, and the indisputable lingering frameworks of European thought in both the historical and present-day United States, it seems likely that general American white fascination with black culture, and more specifically their consistent fetishization of delta blues' perceived authenticity (from Lomax to the 60s hippie movement to the recent blues rock revival of the 2010s) stems largely from this paradigm of thought.

Likely because early delta bluesplayers already had these so-called inherent, essential qualities of authenticity, as well as because they were an unknown "Other" who could be used as a vessel to be filled by white desire, they quickly became ubiquitous popular and critical paragons of essentialist authenticity, and in turn helped fuel and develop essentialist frameworks into fullness. In demonstration: First and foremost, 20th century authenticity models hold that an authentic artist is one who has lived a life of suffering and hardship which he then uses as fuel for creativity; moreover, that the authentic musician must be a common person (typically male) rather than an industry professional or the son of wealth and privilege. He has spent "years touring dive bars"**[4]** (or in the case of a bluesman, often brothels, saloons, and street corners), rather than succeeding through networked industry connections or opulence; as a result, he lives a lonely and isolated life both geographically and emotionally. He feels a deep sense of alienation and posits himself as the protagonist in some vague and unwinnable man versus world conflict (or in the case of the black bluesman, a very real societal oppression) and channels this emotional pain into his art. Finally, his simply being a male is not enough — he must display a deep-seated sense of masculinity through rough-hewn, gravelly vocals and his participation in the aforementioned man-versus-world struggle.



Criteria for authenticity pictured here are either essentialist or proxies for relative/personal authenticity (the latter of which will be explored in more depth in Parts II & III).

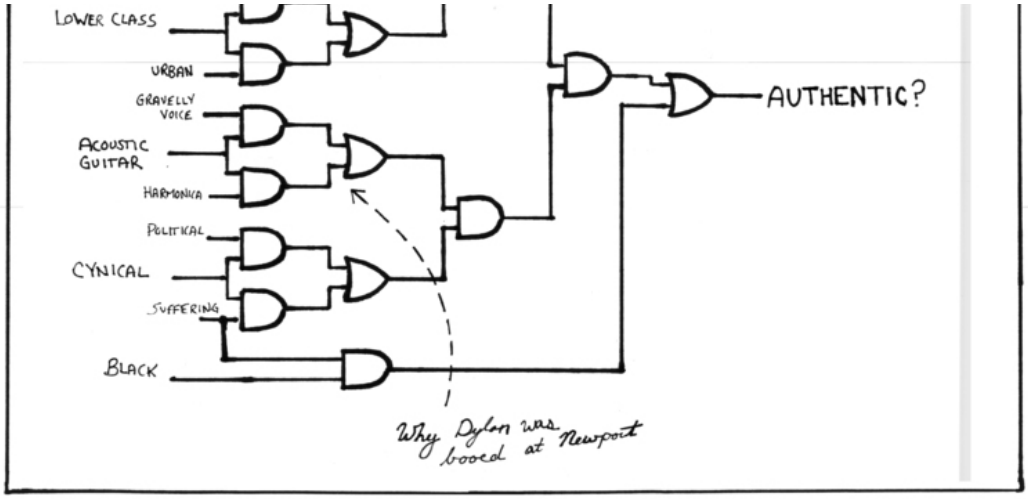


image: Graham Johnson

John Roderick, writing for The Seattle Weekly, observes a similar fetishization of commonness playing a role in Dylan's wild success, which he argues "hinged on one of America's central fallacies: the idea that the simple man is more honest than the educated man, the farmer and laborer more trustworthy than the lawyer of professor, the poor person closer to the source, closer to God, than the middle-class person." Muddy Waters, furthermore, serves as a remarkable example of conceptions of previously explored "otherness authenticity"on display: As his career progressed, Waters would experience radical shifts in his public perception, from "downhome folk bluesman to downhome commercial singer to commercial pop star." As both he and his fellow bluesmen became more and more familiar to mainstream white audiences in the early 20th century, he would lose some of this sense of economic and racial otherness and thus the imparted authenticity which accompanied that it, experiencing as a result a downturn in popularity. However, this authenticity would reappear in the 60s with an emergence of blues revivalism and nostalgia that would recast him as an "old time roots musician," and reinstate his authenticity via nostalgic conceptualization — a temporal, maybe even more than racial, othering.

While these culturally essentialist conceptions of authenticity have been a large part of music criticism's approach to authenticity questions, they does not engulf it entirely; as mentioned earlier, critical concepts of authenticity consist of a duality of absolute or essentialist authenticity and personal/relative authenticity of expression. The rockist, for example, believes that an artist should write and perform his own songs rather than relying on a ghostwriter or playing covers. Additionally, these songs are expected to be primarily autobiographical and deeply personal in both presentation and performance. As such, the rockist believes in natural voice rather than autotune, in of *roman à clef* narrative over fiction,

in "staying true" rather than "selling out." Furthermore, a true rocker's sociopolitical views must run deep to the core rather than bandwagon; essentially, he must express honestly rather than artificially. Despite appearing to fit much of the "culturally authentic" image outlined earlier through their bucolic lyrical imagery, folkie instrumentation choices, and pastoral aesthetics, a band like Mumford & Sons, to pick the most obvious example, still comes under fire by music critics because its members present a personally inauthentic portrait of themselves, their era, and their origins.

What is perhaps most interesting about an approach to authenticity as personal and expressive rather than essentialist is that such an approach appears to be largely absent in historic European art criticism. The most compelling lineage of authenticity as self-expression to a European music or art tradition is suggested by musicologists Hans Weisethaunet and Ulf Lindberg in "Authenticity Revisited: The Rock Critic and the Changing Real," and points vaguely towards the Romantic period's conceptualization of the artist as a genius (though offering little in the way of support for the their being evolutionarily linked). The very fact that up until the 20th century, evaluations of cultural authenticity almost completely dominated Western conversations around musical authenticity seems to undermine this likelihood of European thought as an origin point for modern expressive authenticity notions.

While classical music and its reception bear a large number of differences from that of popular music, rendering it an inherently flawed comparison to popular music today, it might still worth pointing out that historical discourse around classical music is notably devoid of any sort of criticism of upper class, urbanite composers on the basis of their personal authenticity re:, say, their appropriation of bucolic and folk melodies and themes. Even today, academic work on authenticity in classical music is comprised mainly of discussions surrounding the historical authenticity of performances relative to the composer's intent; rarely if ever do such inquiries look into the authenticity of the composer himself. It seems almost absurd to pose a question like "Why did Mozart, a member of the Austrian court, write an opera about the common man, and is he qualified to do so?" But such a line of questioning would be the norm rather than exception in rock criticism today, which inextricably binds the artist with his work rather than separating the two.

A better comparison would perhaps be post-Romantic Western popular music. American parlor songs and ballads in the 19th C, too, direct descendants of European tradition and written primarily by European-Americans, were both composed and received with full awareness and expectation that the music's subject was a work of fiction, at most loosely based on historic events. If European Romanticism was the origin of expressive authenticity,

one would expect in its descendants a sort of evolutionary parsimony, in which all steps of the lineage of European tradition to American contemporary popular music contain a shared emphasis on expressive authenticity. Instead, however, Barker and Taylor note that American popular songs in the late 19th century focused on fantastical or thrilling events rather than personal narratives or autobiography, ranging in subject from fictional tragedies to "the Titanic, a great flood, a famous outlaw... [to] some woodland animals acting out an old fable." Singers were viewed as entertainers, and songwriters as manufacturers of product, their songs written to be easily coverable and to resonate with as many potential consumers as possible, having "little if anything to do with the personal experiences of the entertainer" or the songwriter. **[5]**

The pinnacles of popularity experienced by minstrelsy are themselves evidence of a lack of American popular interest in individual genuineness and sincerity in musical expression during the 19th century. Fascination and focus of the dominant culture was on fiction and fantasy, seeking escape through foreignness rather than an investment in the familiar. Essentialist notions of cultural authenticity are instead the common paradigm of thought, from the Lomaxes to the National Library of Congress, from music critics to music scholars and academics, and at the broadest level, among mainstream white popular thought. When Alan and John Lomax set out on their quest for authentic American folk music, they were really seeking an "uninfluenced, isolated, uncorrupted Other," finding especially in prisoners (to their delight) "Negro[s] who had the least contact with jazz, the radio, and with the white man."**[6]** Weisethaunet et al. note that in the 1930s and 40s, music criticism (by primarily white critics) in magazines like Melody Maker, Down Beat, and Jazz Hot held the dominant view that "the best jazz was performed by African-American musicians, and that white musicians tended to copy the "genuine" jazz with "less poignant versions," which were made less poignant and genuine simply by the basis of the culture from which these musicians originated. Of course, as Weisethaunet and Lindberg point out, what is most ironic about this position, whether it holds water irrelevant, is that the black jazz musicians themselves typically emphasized more concrete elements in defining what jazz was to be taken seriously, such as "the importance of improvisational skills" or "instrumental mastery," rather than the vague sentiments of cultural poignancy so beloved by their critical counterparts. One model essentially evaluated musicians' worth on an individual basis, the other via sweeping ideas of cultural authenticity. William Patterson, a professor at Columbia University, perhaps sums up early-20th century white desire in jazz criticism with a comment in the New York Sun, remarking that "the music of contemporary savages taunts us with a lost art of rhythm."

III. Authenticity as Self-Expression: A Emerging Ethos

"You know, you can only express a true feeling if you're sincere about it. You can only express what happened to you."

— Henry Townsend, black blues singer and musician

"What I do ain't make-believe / People say I sit and try / But when it comes to being De La / It's just me, myself, and I"

— "Me Myself and I" (De La Soul)

Me Myself and I
De La Soul

As Barker and Taylor define it in their discussion of Jimmie Rodger's "T.B. Blues" in *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity*, authenticity of expression refers to the sense that the song was "made out of [Rodger's] own tears and laughter, his own memories and dreams, his own life and everything in it." Similar notions of authenticity, as personal transparency or truthful expressiveness, would begin to be taken seriously for the first time in popular music criticism and popular mindset during the 20th century, just as black music began to integrate into, and quickly dominate, mainstream popular music. Musicians increasingly wrote and recorded their own songs, breaking a long tradition of performing Tin Pan Alley creations or littering their albums with cover songs and ghostwriting. Throughout the 1960s and by the 1970s (after the break-up of the Beatles, and concurrent with the rise of rockism), it had become first normalized, then expected, for a musician to serve both the role of singer and songwriter. Of course, ideas about absolute, inherent cultural and lifestyle authenticity still maintained a stronghold of influence over music culture; one of the primary criticisms of glam rock centered around the inauthenticity of its attendant lifestyle, filled with hedonism and luxury rather than hardship and suffering. Nevertheless, authenticity as self-expression was beginning to gain ground in folk and rock criticism, picking up all the more speed with punk's vicious rejection of all things contrived, artificial, and unoriginal in the 70s and 80s. All this seems much aligned with the idea proposed by Weisethunet and Lindberg that "when applied to a cultural field, [authenticity as self-expression] will usually appear as a demand for originality."

Moreover, post-Civil Rights era critical discourse made increasingly aware the racial and cultural assumptions/biases underlying many lines of rockist thought; by the 70s, bolder rock acts were incorporating synthesizers into their sound (a distinctly un-rockist instrument: too modern, too machine-like, too far-removed from the music "of the people"). And in the wake of anti-disco/anti-glam rockist criticism in late 70s and 80s, a wave of anti-rockist discourses took shape in the critical community, looking specifically to reject and move past essentialist authenticity paradigms.

While Romantic era thought may have partially held over throughout the centuries following it, a more likely origin point for this dramatic shift lies not in European-American but in Black-American musical traditions, whose motivations and functions differed markedly from its more traditionally Western counterpart. Since criticism is instrumental, the criteria or frameworks by which a culture evaluates its art will almost always reflect the purpose of the art itself, and the ends which a community seeks in it. We might understand the emphasis on expressive authenticity within the African-American tradition accordingly: That since African-American music began as a bottom-up cultural creation (compared to, in the case of European classical music) a top-down one, the ends it sought were more populist, communal, and social; it was communication and ritual that served as primary functions of 19th century African-American expression, both pre and postbellum (eg, respectively, work songs and gospel). Black theologian James Cone similarly notes in his essential *The Spirituals and the Blues* that differences between European and African-American music are largely attributable to the different aims with which European and African-American music were made: the former as art for the sake of art, culture, and entertainment; the latter as art for functionality, specifically self-expression, communication, socialization, and mourning. In such settings, honesty and trust are of utmost importance, deception and contrivance deep, personal betrayals. Since African-American music relies largely on the self as playing a role of interaction and mediation between the self and the community (eg gospel), African-American musicians, it follows, would historically be value sincere self-expression — and Cone in fact writes: “The Blues people believe that it is only through the acceptance of the real as disclosed in concrete human affairs that a community can attain authentic existence.” In non-blues black genres as well, authenticity of self-expression played a large role: spirituals and gospels, for instance, bore an important element of confession, relating the self to God (a setting in which artifice and dishonesty is not only looked down upon but of mortal and moral consequence). Musicologist Christopher Small writes:

> “[The gospel singers’] purpose was to testify, in song, to the power of their religious experience, to their very close and personal knowledge of their Jesus and to his ability to

> carry them through the worst that the society and the conditions of the time could do to them. Thus from the start the key to the singer's power in the church was not the possession of a beautiful voice, though many have in fact been endowed with remarkable vocal qualities, but authority, the authority of one who has lived sense of the experience. If you haven't lived it, they say, you can't sing it." **[6]**

However, while it would be easy to break modern notions of authenticity into a dichotomy that pits European essentialism and African-American relativism, this would grossly oversimplify a complicated, racially and culturally interwoven history. Moreover, neither the function of "music as art" nor that of "music as social expression" lends itself purely to one view of genuineness. The very emphasis on community in many black genres, for example, can also lead to compromised or diminished authenticity of self-expression: Barker and Taylor note that despite the prominence of many blind black gospel/blues singers around the turn of the century, there were virtually no songs sung about blindness — though one would imagine that if a singer is being honest about his personal struggles, lacking sight would be far up top of the list for blind singers. This, the musicologists, is likely due to the fact that there was simply not a large enough audience who could connect and identify with such a subject matter; it's a phenomenon not far removed from the way, say, corporate pop operates today: identify the lowest common denominator of universal experience/emotion, then exploit it. In both cases, populist functions both drive and mitigate the role of expressive authenticity.

Other factors, too, contradict the idea — primarily perpetuated by white desire — of blues tradition (typically held up as a paragon of authentic expression) as either culturally and expressively pure. For one, despite the impression in the popular mindset/among blues revivalists that the delta blues was a non-commercial music, the craft was very much commercially motivated as well, serving as a means for sharecroppers, farmers, and impoverished blacks to earn an additional income playing saloons, house parties, or busking on the street. And both the namesake and genre-defining aesthetics of the blues center around a very particular kind of personal expression, one filled with troubles, hardship, and sadness. This turns an expressive expectation into an essentialist one, positing that these specific emotions are a more authentic mode of living/feeling than pleasure or contentment (see: glam rock). Sterling Brown writes in the collection *Negro Caravan* that the blues was an expression of "hard luck, 'careless' or unrequited love, broken family life, or general dissatisfaction with a cold and trouble-filled world."**[7]** This puts a burden on the blues singer to focus on and convey such emotions and expression, *even if they don't necessarily represent his personal emotional state:* blues scholar Marybeth Hamilton illustrates this duality of self-expression and

mandated expression best perhaps in her description of the genre as “a deeply personal music permeated by anguish and pain.”

Nevertheless, despite blues’ purity being largely a social construct of popular mythology, Barker and Taylor posit and strongly evidence that almost all autobiographical music in America at the beginning of the twentieth century was of African-American origins; music scholar Teresa L. Reed similarly concurs that "blues lyrics of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s tend to contain highly descriptive, autobiographical material full of state."**[8]** Its Southern rural genre counterparts like country and hillbilly, meanwhile, almost never featured autobiographical works based in personal experience; it was almost automatically assumed that songs in its traditions were works of fiction or legend, separate from the life of its creator. Barker and Taylor write: “At the time, there was no good reason to think that the person singing on a particular record was really who he or she appeared to be: records were disembodied voices, not real people, and those voices could — and usually did — sing fiction. Public performances were likewise entertainments that had little if anything to do with the personal experiences of the entertainer.”

IV. Convergence and Evolution

If the state of white American musical culture around the turn of the 19th century was that of primary interest in musical otherness and fiction, contrasted by a fledgling African-American musical tradition emphasizing communication and individual expression within a social context, how then did the latter paradigm of thought rise up to dominate critical and popular thought by the end of the 20th century?

As Cruz writes in *Culture on the Margins*, Frederick Douglass in the middle of the 19th century would be one of the first to call for a serious critical re-evaluation of the slave spiritual as a serious and respectable art form, supplicating Americans to approach the spiritual not as some crude and primitive, semi-animalistic alien “other” (reflecting European approaches to essentialist authenticity and organicness) but rather to interpret it as an expression of the “inner world” of the slave, approaching its songs as “testimonies to their lives, as indicating their sense of social fate.” Cruz points to this as the beginning of a trend in social science towards “ethnosympathy,” still in line with European “Other” conceptualization and still adhering to white desire despite being well-intentioned and generally humanitarian. However, the speech might be even more compellingly viewed as the beginning of a slow break-away

from the European "otherness" approach, a move to reform scholarship on African-American music by approaching the spiritual as a unit of personal expression rather than a cultural Other to be taxonomied and fetishized on essentialist grounds. W.E.B. DuBois would continue the advocacy of such an approach with his 1903 essay "The Sorrow Songs," in which he characterizes the spiritual as the "most beautiful expression of human experience."

While this quality of self-expression had always been a large part of spirituals, which focused on topics like plantation life and slave spirituality (Cone makes clear that it is important to understand them as "expressions of individual negroes" rather than a sort of shared cultural expression), Douglass' and DuBois' writings would begin an important altering both in how spirituals were viewed and, more largely, the way critical discourse approached and sought value in popular music as a whole.

As the 20th century passed by, shifts in critical thought were likely an increasingly organic byproduct of black music's incorporation into, and domination of, popular music making: it stands to reason that as black musicians gained cultural currency, their own musical values would gain traction as well. As the blues merged with country to become rock and roll, one of the primary features which would carry on into rock was its emphasis on music as community. In response (or as natural reaction), emerging rock critics in the 1960s, like Village Voice's Richard Goldstein, sought out to measure authenticity through how the artist was perceived by his community and successfully reflected his sociogeographical setting. Frith in 1983 would write that academic musicological approaches to rock often failed because they missed entirely the point of the genre. Rock, he wrote, "is made in order to have emotional, social, physical... results; it is not music made 'for its own sake'" — and his definition through contrast (which mirrors Cone's aforementioned differentiation of African-American from Western musical tradition argued in *The Spirituals and the Blues*) illustrates just what a break the genre was from the European musical tradition of high art.

Black music critics like Alain Locke and Carman Moore, with their own approaches and a universal desire to distance themselves from white primitivist fascination, also increasingly gained a voice and audience in the mid-20th century. Moore would be a crucial catalyst in this transformation, arguing strongly and radically for the existence of a "black truth" in direct opposition with earlier concepts of folkie authenticity. In this model of black truth, Devon Powers writes in *Rock Criticism and Intellectual History at the Village Voice, 1955-1972*, "being authentic meant displaying one's 'soul,' and creating music that 'keeps it real.'" Moore illustrates the sociogeographical authenticity of expression which he viewed as an inherent facet of black music-making, writing that the "very form" of black music "bends and reforms

with each change in the life of the people. The sharecropper will moan and cry in the voice and lay his phrases out asymmetrically. The urban man, having a little amplifier money, jazz aspirations to high class, and perhaps a little fame, will shout his blues in stout voice and play in the precision of 12 [sic] expected bars... Both are committed to life as it is." Such a model does not impose a narrative of what sort of culture or lifestyle constitutes an authentic existence; instead, it demands of the artist an honest rather than contrived expression of whatever culture or lifestyle is actually his own.

These critics, and the music which they celebrated, were certainly important in the adoption of new models of authenticity conceptualization, but equally necessary for its incorporation was an existing need in the dominant culture for such a model. Various scholars have suggested that part of the fetishization of individualism and originality that emerged in the 20th century was as a response to means of mass production and easy replication. Recording technology as well adds a mask or screen to its music, separating the performer from his music and perhaps creating a void for authenticity which had been previously filled by first-hand eyewitness at live performances. Maybe even most crucially, the 20th century heralded in a sweeping national interest in both listening to and participating in popular mass music. Bottom-up cultural creation approaches by white musicians during this time period — punk being the most obvious and dramatic example — would follow a similar trajectory as African-American music had over a hundred years prior, seeking to fulfill the same communal and expressive functions as those which black genres had originally been created for.

Commercialization, white exploitation, and the inevitable cross-fertilization of ideas which is arguably American music's greatest distinguishing feature, however, has led to both essentialized and expressive models being simultaneously employed by critics and public alike — often in nonsensical and contradictory ways. Hip-hop is perhaps the most conspicuous example: with its origins planted firmly in a history of community, social protest, and individual expression, hip-hop self-identifies as artistry and emphasizes authenticity of self/of self-expression. But its unprecedented popularity has blurred the borders of the hip-hop community both along race and class lines: hip-hop finds itself having to straddle two functions and separate sets of expectations — in this case, between hip-hop as sincere or "genuine" self-expression and hip-hop as a manifestation of essentially-black culture, a preservation and expression of a racialized culture (be it street, gangsta, drill, crunk, trap). Hip-hop artists, pincered by the convergence of these sets of authenticity models, feel themselves pressured both within the hip-hop community and by "othering" audiences into playing an archetype of a rapper, an essentialist notion of what constitutes an "authentic" black male experience, usually involving a lower class upbringing and drug dealing or violence

(evidence of masculinity). Kembrew McLeod's "Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation" includes a chart (Table 1, below, with all words in italics sparingly added by this current essay's author) referencing general guidelines to what is seen as authentic and inauthentic within hip-hop discourse, and the intersection of essentialist and expressive authenticity in these guidelines is striking.

Table 1. Support Claims of Authenticity[36]

Semantic Dimensions	REAL	FAKE
Social-psychological	staying true to yourself *(expressive)*	following trends
Racial	Black *(essentialist)*	White
Political/Economic	the underground	the commercial
Gender-sexual	hard *(essentialist/masculinity)*	soft
Socio locational	the street *(essentialist/class-based)*	the suburbs
Cultural	old school *(essentialist/nostalgic)*	mainstream

[1] Kalpana Ram, "Listening to the Call of Dance: Re-thinking Authenticity and 'Essentialism'" (The Australian Journal of Anthropology 11, no. 3, 2000), 358.

[2] Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), 93.

[3] Christopher Lasch, The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics (New York: Norton, 1991), 85.

[4] Sanneh, "The Rap Against Rockism."

[5] Barker and Taylor, Faking It!: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 15, 103.

[6] Benjamin Filene, Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 51.

[7] Christopher Small, Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in African-American Music (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1998), 105.

[8] Sterling and Sanders, A Son's Return: Selected Essays of Sterling A. Brown (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996) 222.

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