

The “American Sublime” in Symphonic Music of the United States:
Case Study Applications of a Literary and Visual Arts Aesthetic

by

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ABSTRACT

The American sublime aesthetic, discussed frequently in literature and art of the United States, is equally manifest in the nation's symphonic music as a concurrent and complementary aesthetic. The musical application of the American sublime supports and enriches current scholarship on American musical identity, nationality, and the American symphonic enterprise. I suggest that the American sublime forms an integral part of nineteenth-century American music and is key to understanding the symphony as a genre in the United States. I discuss American symphonic works by Anthony Philip Heinrich, George Frederick Bristow, William Henry Fry, Dennison Wheelock, and Florence Beatrice Price, aided by an analytical tool which I developed, to illuminate my appraisal of the nineteenth-century American symphonic enterprise. Their compositions contribute meaningfully to the complex history of identity formation for both American composers and the nation. In focusing on these incorporations of the sublime by white composers and composers of color from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, my research demonstrates how the American sublime expanded and transformed to better accommodate the country's diverse citizenry, despite the marginalization of some.

The nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic dialogue between Americans and their European contemporaries sustained a "distinctly cosmopolitan cultural ethos," a phenomenon also described by Douglas Shadle as "one of the most vibrant intercultural exchanges in all of Western music history." This dialogue shaped the cultural formation of identity for many American composers throughout the century and provided the foundation for a symphonic repertoire, which became internationally recognized for the

first time as “American.” In this cosmopolitan environment, the Americanization of the sublime aided in the rebranding of long-established European artistic expressions like the symphony, while perpetuating the idealization of the nation’s geography, its people, and its beliefs. Perhaps most importantly, the American sublime supported the widely held belief in American exceptionalism and manifest destiny. The applicability of the American sublime to various genres made it a useful tool to assert autonomy and individuality in forms such as the symphony. For this reason, a reevaluation of American symphonic music and its relation to the American sublime amplifies the significance of this repertoire.

DEDICATION

To my family.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

DETERMINANCY AND DISRUPTION: THE SUBLIMITY OF AMERICAN MUSIC

*Whilst eloquence repeats his praise,
And poesy's mellifluous lays
Hymn the great HERO's name;
Music her soothing power applies-
O mightier her lofty numbers rise
Sublime as is his fame!*

-Anonymous (1800)

After seven years of battles and more than 35,000 dead American soldiers, the Revolutionary War finally ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783. In the years that followed, the champion of the war, General George Washington, rose to God-like status as the nation's first president in 1789 only to become further deified following his death on December 14, 1799. The disruptions caused by the American Revolution and Washington's death are perhaps the most pivotal catalysts of the sublime concept in American aesthetics of the nineteenth century. The determinacy that once existed as a colony of Great Britain was no longer available, and the problem of American identity lurched to the forefront of artistic expression. Political independence was one thing, but how could composers declare musical independence from not only England but all of Europe?

In a collection of dirges, hymns, and anthems published in January of 1800 for the anniversary of Washington's birth, the recently deceased became immortalized through music that was intentionally composed as an offering "consecrated and most respectfully

dedicated to the citizens of the United States."¹ The collection portrays Washington as "Columbia's Savior" and as a symbol of "exalted virtues" and "distinguished talents," attributes characteristically purported to be distinctly American. Honorableness, goodness, genius, wisdom, and purity are among those acclaimed qualities. Additionally, according to several songs in the collection, Washington was not merely dead, but translated and immortal.

Then let fraternal love attune the lyre;
And snatch a ray of genius' sacred fire;
Whilst the sad strain, in soft and solemn lays,
Dwell on his merit and records his praise;
Let the full chord to yon blue arch arise;
Our Washington's translated, translated to the skies.²

What results through these combined texts and tunes is the first appearance of the American sublime through the intersection of politics, mythology, and nationalism in music of the nineteenth century.

Characteristic of literature and art of the United States since its colonization, the American sublime is similarly manifest in the nation's symphonic music as a concurrent and complementary aesthetic. America's unique version of the Western European sublime topic contributes to issues of national identity and makes it a valuable tool for critical discourse about American music. In this dissertation, I address the necessary and essential components of the American sublime and provide several case studies to contextualize its presence, adaptation, and significance in symphonic music beginning in

¹ George Washington was born on February 22, 1732. *Sacred Dirges, Hymns, and Anthems, Commemorative of the Death of General George Washington, The Guardian of his Country, and the Friend of Man* (Boston, MA: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1800), 5.

² Mrs. Rowson of Medford, "A Dirge," in *Sacred Dirges, Hymns, and Anthems, Commemorative of the Death of General George Washington, The Guardian of his Country, and the Friend of Man* (Boston, MA: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1800), 16.

approximately 1800 and ending with the disruptions of World War II around 1940. I propose that the American sublime forms an integral part of American music and is key to understanding the symphonic genre, specifically, in the United States. Case studies include symphonic works by Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781-1861), William Henry Fry (1813-64), George Frederick Bristow (1825-98), Dennison Wheelock (1871-1927), and Florence Price (1887-1953) to illuminate my appraisal of approximately the first century and a half of American symphonic composition. The first three musicians in this list are unquestionably the most significant American symphonic composers of the nineteenth century. The two last-named composers, both people of color and one of whom was female, allow the opportunity to address the white, male origins of the American sublime aesthetic, and to illustrate how commenting on its presence is relevant for symphonic music, regardless of the composer's ethnicity. Wheelock and Price did not have the same access to many advantages naturally guaranteed by the whiteness of the other three composers. Even in light of these insurmountable inequities, much can be learned by considering ways each composer captured the sublime individually, contextualized by their own realities

Because an aesthetics of the sublime is largely unacknowledged in Americanist musicology to date, this combined Introduction and Selected Literature Review of writings on the sublime must cover substantial ground. After defining and problematizing the sublime aesthetic in this and the next subsection (“Can Music Be Sublime?”), I describe two phases of Americanization that brought U. S. arts culture to a first phase of nationalized sublime aesthetic principles (“The First American Sublime”), which is summarized graphically in Figure 1.1, “Phases of the Sublime.” Following an explanation

of those phases, I list several defining questions which help locate the sublime in music. This Introduction closes with a chapter summary of this dissertation.

The aesthetic ideal of the “sublime” has maintained a presence in Western art, literature, and music for nearly three centuries.³ In summing up the three great German-speaking symphonic composers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, ETA Hoffmann wrote, “Haydn grasps romantically what is human in human life; he is more commensurable, more comprehensible for the majority.” Mozart calls rather for the superhuman, the wondrous element that abides in inner being. Beethoven's music sets in motion the lever of fear, of awe, of horror, of suffering, and wakens just that infinite longing which is the essence of romanticism.” These words about Beethoven capture the aesthetic whose transformation into American musical language is the subject of this dissertation.⁴

Despite its unmistakable presence, the sublime in American musical culture has received significantly less attention than in Europe. As they grappled with rendering the “terra incognita” of the North American continent into vernacular terms, early American writers and painters relied on the Enlightenment sublime aesthetic as outlined in Edmund Burke’s (1729-1797) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*) (1781). Their art led me to question the implications

³ While this study begins with the eighteenth century, the philosophical concept of the sublime originates in a first-century C.E. treatise entitled *Peri Hypsous* (*On the Sublime*). Although its authorship is unknown, Pseudo-Longinus is often credited with its creation. See Longinus, *On the Sublime* (trans. A. O. Prickard, Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1906).

⁴ E. T. A. Hoffmann, “Beethoven’s Instrumental Music,” https://is.muni.cz/el/1421/podzim2008/VH_751/hoffmann.html.

of the sublime aesthetic in American music.⁵ Burke's perception that sublime art is a reflection of the sublime in nature resonated with many Americans who sought to preserve feelings of awe and wonder, for example, as artifacts of national identity. In the wake of the American Revolution, this transplanted sublime aesthetic not only became associated with place but also with ideology. In 1810, Samuel Stanhope Smith, Presbyterian minister and founder of what would become Princeton University, attributed America's "climate" to the unique pairing of geography and a "community conceived in revolution."⁶ Smith believed that this climate leaves a recognizable mark on those who live within it, a mark of "Americanness." With its connotations to new vistas and new ideology, the American sublime emerged in the nineteenth century as a distinct aesthetic, already replete with national meaning. Subsequently, literary scholars have identified the aesthetic in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), Herman Melville (1819-1891), Walt Whitman (1819-1892), and Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). Art historians categorize many paintings by artists of the Hudson River School including those by Thomas Cole (1801-1848), Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), and Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902) as representative of the American sublime. American music, on the other hand, has not been viewed from this perspective.

The nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic dialogue between urban Americans and their city-dwelling European contemporaries sustained a "distinctly cosmopolitan cultural ethos," also described by Douglas Shadle as "one of the most vibrant intercultural

⁵ Chandos Michael Brown, "The First American Sublime," in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to Present* ed. Timothy M. Costelloe (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 147.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

exchanges in all of Western music history.”⁷ This dialogue shaped the cultural formation of identity for many American composers of concert music throughout the century, and ultimately established the foundations of a symphonic repertoire that by the 1850s became internationally recognized for the first time as “American.” In this cosmopolitan environment, the Americanization of the sublime aided in the rebranding of long-established European artistic expressions like the symphony, while sustaining the idealization of the nation’s unique geography, its people, and its beliefs. Perhaps most importantly, the American sublime supported nineteenth-century devotion to American exceptionalism and manifest destiny. As Rob Wilson observes, “[The American sublime] helped to consolidate an American identity founded in representing a landscape of immensity [and power] open to multiple identifications [or uses].”⁸ The applicability of the American sublime to various mediums made it a useful tool to assert autonomy and individuality in forms such as the symphony.

Although the sublime would prove useful for many composers, the rhetoric which surrounds it is founded predominantly on beliefs, ideals, and relationships defined within white Western-European culture. As illustrated by the case studies throughout this dissertation, concepts of exceptionalism and identity formation, as well as the intensity of the power dynamics between Self and Other often originate from the perception of the White Self. While the sublime does not exclude the experiences of non-white people, as

⁷ Douglas W. Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6-7.

⁸ Rob Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 5.

is illustrated in Chapter Five, those who do not easily align with the rhetoric of “Americanness” must not only face the sublimity of the Other, but also the Self as Other.⁹

CAN MUSIC BE SUBLIME?

Although a complete history of the sublime is outside the limitations of this study, a discussion of its validity as an aesthetic concept is pertinent before theorizing its use as an analytical tool in music. As Rob Wilson cautions, “Unless historicized, the sublime can degenerate into one of those vapid critical terms which, like *auratic* or *demonic*, one inflects nowadays mostly in italics.”¹⁰ Timothy Costelloe observes that current criticism of the sublime, including its limitations and even its relevance in ongoing aesthetic discussions, is based primarily on the concept of the sublime as a “philosophical concept” and not as a part of the “human condition.”¹¹ Thomas Weiskel likewise identifies criticism surrounding the idea of the sublime due to its subjectivity. Originating in Burke’s observation that dark, terrifying, or bewildering images affect the emotions more so than those that are clear or obvious, both Costelloe and Weiskel contend the sublime threatens understanding. In 1757, Burke identified the source of his theorized human response: “it is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration, and chiefly excites

⁹ For an additional nineteenth-century example of a Black musical perspective on the concept of nation and musical expression, see Thomas Wiggins’s piano solo *Battle of Manassas* (1861).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹¹ Timothy W. Costelloe, “The Sublime: A Short Introduction to a Long History,” in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy M. Costelloe (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

our passions. Knowledge and acquaintance make the most striking causes affect but little.”¹² The incomprehensible thus becomes the genesis for the sublime.

Moreover, as Weiskel suggests, “[T]he sublime comes to be associated both with the failure of clear thought and with matters beyond determinate perception.”¹³ Although Weiskel and Costelloe ultimately defend the sublime, this lack of “clear thought” continues to fuel modern criticism of scholarship on the sublime. Judy Lockhead argues that because the sublime is “irredeemably tainted” with political ideologies of power and gender, it is “dangerous” and “contrary to the philosophical and political goals of feminism” (see Lockhead, 2008).¹⁴ Jane Forsey (2007) argues that a theory of the sublime is, in fact, impossible because of its epistemological and ontological transcendence.¹⁵ She summarized her argument by stating, “In one interpretation, the sublime can be nothing; in the second, anything; in the third, it cannot be theorized at all.”

While Forsey’s astute observation is accurate to an extent (that the subjectivity of the sublime can mean many things to many people), the use of sublime rhetoric and its related emotions within a specific community (the United States) tethers the sublime to a

¹² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), ed. James T. Boulton (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987), 61.

¹³ Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 17.

¹⁴ Judy Lockhead, “The Sublime, the Ineffable, and Other Dangerous Aesthetics,” *Women & Music* 12 (2008), 63.

¹⁵ Jane Forsey, “Is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 (2007). 16. Reprinted in Lars Aagaard-Morgensen, *The Possibility of the Sublime: Aesthetic Exchanges* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017). All subsequent references are to the reprint.

real, tangible place. The epistemology and ontology of the sublime can mirror the people who experience it. While the sublime does reflect power structures as Lockhead suggests, externally imposed power need not be the only one at play. My purpose is to examine human responses to power as expressed in music. With Wilson, I see the sublime as a response to power, and thus, a “genre of empowerment.”¹⁶ When marginalized people rise up against their oppressors, their efforts are sublime. In this way, the sublime can be seen to renounce the claims of a purely “philosophical concept” to become an integral part of the “human condition.” With fruitful possibilities and despite its naysayers, the sublime saw renewed interest during the 1980s and early 90s (see Arensberg, 1986; Crowther, 1989; Lyotard, 1991; Wilson, 1991) and more recently in the twenty-first century (see Pillow, 2000; Myskja, 2002; Shaw, 2006; Morely, 2010; Costelloe, 2012; Aagaard-Morgensen, 2017). This recent scholarship broadens the reach of the sublime, particularly in the visual and language arts, and situates it as a thriving subcategory of aesthetic scholarship. But what about music?

With its connections to humanity, emotions, power, politics, and identity, the sublime appears well suited for use in musicological discourse. However, sublimity tends to be relegated to the eighteenth century when it seems the word “sublime” was perpetually on the tongues of the learned. As a result, scholarship related to German or Austrian music of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (particularly concerning the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven) accounts for the bulk of research on musical sublimity (see Schwartz, 1990; Webster, 1991, 1997; Sisman, 1993; Bonds, 1995; Brown, 1996; Taruskin, 2005). Even within this narrow chronological framework, Wye

¹⁶ Wilson, 169.

Allanbrook identifies weaknesses: moments of “authorial grasping at straws” within several of these studies, and persistent issues of translation.¹⁷ The problem with translation stems from the German *erhaben*, as seen in Allanbrook’s commentary on a 1774 article by Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (1747-1800).

In English translations of the Schulz article the score is three for and five against: Sisman and Bonds use the term “sublime,” while Bathia Churgin, the original English translator, and James Webster back “noble” and “elevated,” Leonard Ratner uses “exalted” and Nancy Baker turns the substantive adjective into a noun, “grandeur.” In his article on eighteenth-century instrumental styles, Michael Broyles splits the difference, translating *erhaben* as “elevated” in one sentence and “sublime” in the next.¹⁸

The resulting confusion combined with its subjectivity may well merit a scholarly aversion to the sublime. As Allanbrook observes, “Neither Burke nor Kant put much stock in the musical sublime. One gets the impression that for Burke, while the beautiful may be formed music, the sublime is principally natural or human made noise—‘vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery.’”¹⁹ However, it was precisely “natural noise” that inspired American composers such as Heinrich, Fry, and Bristow to render these sounds symphonically.

It was Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1770-1834) who first developed a theory of the musical sublime using the principles set forth by Kant.²⁰ Michaelis chose to focus on

¹⁷ Allanbrook cites Elaine Sisman’s application of Kant’s mathematical sublime to the coda of Mozart’s “Jupiter” symphony (the symphony predates Kant’s *Critique* by two years). Wye J. Allanbrook, “Is the Sublime a Musical Topos,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 7, No. 2 (2010), 263.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 263. See also Judith L. Schwartz, ‘Periodicity and Passion in the First Movement of Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony’, in *Studies in Musical Sources and Style: Essays in Honor of Jan LaRue*, edited by Eugene K. Wolf and Edward H. Roesner (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1990), 293–338.

the disruptive and immeasurable qualities of sublimity, which manifest principally as shock and awe. This emotional response was either achieved “by uniformity so great that it almost excludes variety,” or too much variety resulting in “a thundering torrent of sounds,” which ultimately fills the listener “with horror and rapture, with sweet dread.”²¹ Burke, Kant, and Michaelis focused primarily on sound; contrasts between loud and soft, organized and chaotic account for much of the sublime rhetoric of European music. This concept is similarly articulated by Johann Friedrich Rochlitz (1769-1842), who stated, “The material for the sublime composition results from the visible attributes of sublime objects, as if analogous with them.”²² In other words, a soaring mountaintop would appear musically elevated through pitch and dynamics; a roaring river could be represented similarly through sound and rhythm. Here, as Allanbrook rightly observes, dynamic contrasts, sudden changes, musical confusion, or silence are “secondary parameters,” as described by Leonard Meyer.²³ This is where previous theories of the musical sublime fall short. While Michaelis and Rochlitz attempt to provide signposts for the sublime, they were not concerned with the embodied social meaning of the music. In recent years, several authors succeeded at expanding into social meaning, including Mark Evan Bonds in *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (2006) and Stephen Downes in the chapter “Beautiful and Sublime” in *Aesthetics of*

²¹ Quoted in Allanbrook, 266.

²² Friedrich Rochlitz, “Rhapsodische Gedanken über die zweckmässige Benutzung der Materie der Musik,” *Der neue teutsche Merkur* 10 (1798). Cited in Baker and Christensen, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition*, 130. See also Allanbrook, 266.

²³ Quoted in Allanbrook, 266. See also Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: History, Theory, and Ideology* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

Music: Musicological Perspectives (2016). In *Music as Thought*, Bonds provides a close reading of E.T.A. Hoffmann's (1776-1822) "Hegelian teleology" used to rank the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.²⁴ In what is perhaps the most valuable study of the sublime in music, Downes extends the sublime further into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by identifying it in the works of Wagner, Tchaikovsky, and Poulenc as well as introducing subcategories of the gothic and comic into sublime musical discourse.

The work of Meyer, Allanbrook, Bonds, and Downes establish the sublime as a musical category. If viewed in relation to its evolution over time and its social context, the sublime has the potential to enhance musicological discourse and illuminate the relationships between composer, place, and politics. Taking their research into account, I have expanded Michaelis's categories to illustrate how certain passages of music can be considered sublime. The result is four catalysts of the sublime in music.

- 1) Music promotes/triggers sublime emotion/feeling in the auditor. This can be achieved through any element of music: melody, harmony, texture, timbre, dynamics, rhythm, or form. For example, the physicality of sound within a space (soundwaves) can be sublime as it relates to volume or intensity of sound.²⁵

²⁴ See Arthur Ware Locke and E. T. A. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music: Translated from E. T. A. Hoffmann's 'Kreisleriana' with an Introductory Note," *The Musical Quarterly* 3, No. 1 (January 1917): 123-133.

²⁵ One may also consider the relationship between the sublime and music used for torture. See Suzanne G. Cusick, "Music as Torture/Music as Weapon," *Revista Transcultural de Música/Transcultural Music Review* 10 (December 2006); Suzanne G. Cusick, "'You are in a place that is out of the world...': Music in the Detention Camps of the 'Global War on Terror,'" *Journal of the Society of American Music* 2, no.1 (2008): 1-26; Lara Pelegrinelli, "Scholarly Discord: The Politics of Music in the War on Terrorism," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 8, 2009, B6-B9; Maria Zuazu, "Loud but Non-lethal: Acoustic Stagings and State-sponsored Violence," *Women & Music* 19 (2015): 151-159.

- 2) Music can convey a sublime idea or thought, such as in references to nature, degree of wildness, life/death, or divinity.
- 3) Music has the ability to convey the sublime experience of a composer. In this way, the emotions of the composer account for a sense of the remembered sublime.²⁶
- 4) The physical presence of the music as an object can be sublime. This may be in the form of a large (dimensions) or long score or the size of the performing forces.

Just as the identification of the sublime has enriched European music, the same remains true for music in America.

AMERICANIZING THE SUBLIME—Phase One

On September 12, 1803, the Reverend Daniel Dana delivered an address to the Essex Musical Association in Newburyport, MA, on the virtues of sacred music.²⁷ In his discourse, Dana comments on the absence of native-composed music equal to the music of European countries like Italy, France, England (and, presumably, German-speaking lands), evidently alluding to the lack of large-form symphonic and operatic works. He determined that the country's "infancy," and the economic limitations placed on

²⁶ See Jerrold Levinson, *Music, Art, and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (1990; rep., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jerrold Levinson, *Music in the Moment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

²⁷ Daniel Dana (1771-1859) was the third pastor of Old South Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, MA, a position he held for twenty-six years. During his tenure, Dana was accused of being "theologically unsound" by members of his congregation based on the "high degree of literary finish" he applied to Calvinistic teachings. Dana was persuaded to leave Old South to become the fourth president of the of Dartmouth University following the Dartmouth College Case and the death of Francis Brown. While the verdict of the case was in support of Dartmouth, the four-year legal battle left the College financially unstable. Dana served for only one year from 1820 to 1821 and resigned due to exhaustion and ill health. ("The Wheelock Succession of Dartmouth Presidents," accessed October 19, 2019, <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~president/succession/>).

composers preventing them from “devoting their lives to [composition]” were at the roots of the United States’ musical deficiency.²⁸

To speak of the existing state of music in our own country, is a difficult and delicate talk. Indeed our character, in this respect, is scarcely formed. Our music, whether considered as an art or a science, is still in its infancy. Nor do we seem, as yet, to have agreed on any standard by which the merit of compositions is to be tested. The state of society among us being so little advanced, few of our composers have been enabled, like the great masters of Europe, to devote their lives to the object.

Dana acknowledges the while American composers have made attempts that reveal “gleams of genius,” a majority of the nation’s music is

composed on no plan, conformed to no principles, and communicating no distinct or abiding impression—fugitive, unsubstantial things, which fill the ear, and starve the mind.

Ultimately, he admits,

[T]here are some bright and honorable exceptions; exceptions which promise to vindicate our musical character, and prevent the utter perversion of our taste; which exhibit the vast superiority of the *old school*, and are a standing reproof of the modern revolutionary spirit[.]²⁹

Here, Dana identifies a schism in taste that would plague the American symphonic enterprise for the rest of the century and beyond. He recognizes that the dominant cultural “taste” of the early nineteenth-century United States relied on the “superiority” of the old European symphonic models, and simultaneously recognized, and disparaged, a secondary taste rooted in “revolutionary spirit.” That same secondary essence inspired

²⁸ Daniel Dana, “Discourse on Music,” addressed to the Essex Musical Association, September 12, 1803, Newburyport, 1803. Reprinted: “On Music,” *Merrimack Magazine and Ladies’ Literary Cabinet* 1, No. 30, (Newburyport, MA: Whittingham & John Gilman, March 8, 1806), 119.

²⁹ Dana, 119.

many to laud George Washington dirges and ditties and would influence composers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In fact, by the time of Washington's death, the sublime was already well into its second manifestation. The first, identified as the ideological sublime by Chandos Michael Brown, began as the first European settlements took root on the continent and continued until approximately 1700.³⁰ That phase represented the convergence of two "epistemological traditions."³¹ The first is defined by the same English empiricism evident in the writings of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton that inspired Burke's 1757 defense of the sublime as a category of experience. Brown observes that "By the middle of the eighteenth century [...] the impulse to catalog nature (and all manner of natural processes, including human behavior) was simply reflexive in the English imagination."³² The sublime, as a part of human behavior, succumbed to the same taxonomic logic as did plants, animals, and rocks. Brown continues,

The first English empire required an epistemology that reckoned the value of things as an end in itself—knowledge was power only as it advanced the ambitions of the emergent English state and as it aided in the discovery and often ruthless exploitation of the contents of the globe. It also required considering the nature of the English as a people distinct from any other.³³

Ultimately a refining process that prepared the way for American exceptionalism, England's conquests and colonialism defined the nation as Empire. As England spread across the globe, white, English-speaking colonists inherited its rhetoric of superiority.

³⁰ Brown, 148.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 148-149.

³³ Ibid., 149.

Among these were the British colonists in North America, foremost objects of the *translatio studii et imperii* or the transfer of legitimacy through cultural and political power. America thus inherited its lust for exceptionalism, built in many instances on another inheritance, the slavery system, from its British parent. This desire for distinction rooted deeply into the American psyche and has remained, for some, a defining feature of national sublimity and identity.

Together with British empiricism, Brown's second tradition implicated in the ideological sublime is American Protestantism. Although early puritan views denied the presence of God in nature—since finding the divine in nature implied the heresy of locating God in humankind, God's presence inevitably spread to the American wilderness. Residents believed that Divine creative power imbued the landscape, filling Americans with spiritual awe. As Brown concludes, "The 'natural' order was the end of creation made manifest. Nature was second scripture, a repository of ethical values, and nature predicated the republican enterprise."³⁴ Eighteenth-century writers like Protestant theologian Johnathan Edwards (1703-1758) and the naturalist William Bartram (1739-1823) read the landscape around them as scripture written by God's hand. For Edwards, God was in the celestial bodies above and the terrestrial objects below.³⁵ Bartram likewise acknowledges in his *Travels* (1791) a divine presence in the world, albeit from a more secular perspective.³⁶ Drawing on the political rhetoric of the 1760s and 1770s,

³⁴ Ibid., 152.

³⁵ See Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend, Learned, and Pious Mr. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College of New-Jersey Together with Extracts from His Private Writings and Diary and Also Seventeen Select Sermons on Various Important Subjects* (Northampton, MA: S. Kneeland, 1804), 29.

³⁶ Brown, 153.

Bartram “sees in nature not a simulacrum of divine form but a version of regulated polity that is connected by degree to similar, human organizations.”³⁷ With this perspective, Bartram paralleled the organic, ideally interwoven fabric of the nascent republic to the landscape that formed its cradle. This intimate relationship between politics, place, and divine supported the belief that God preserved the American continent for the great American experiment.³⁸ This supernatural endorsement helped to legitimize revolutionary motives and strengthen claims of exceptionalism. Although “Burke never presumed to read the will of God in nature, either in the past or future,” as Brown observes, “Americans were quite certain they could, and that the prospect was sublime.”³⁹

AMERICANIZING THE SUBLIME—Phase Two

While traditions of English empiricism and American Protestantism had formed the ideological sublime, the addition of revolution spurred the second manifestation of sublimity in America known as the nationalist sublime. From approximately 1760 to 1820, the nationalist sublime legitimized the American Revolutionary War and the sentiments leading up to it as progressive and natural. The Spirit of ‘76 flourished well

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ It bears mentioning that American enlightenment thinkers specifically disregarded the native inhabitants of the continent in this rhetoric. Native Americans appear to have been regarded either as new species who had more in common with the whitetail deer than the transplanted Englishman, or a threat to safety that had to be controlled or eliminated.

³⁹ Brown, 153.

into the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ The success of the revolution was considered part of a natural progression of time and history; Americans in power believed that God had willed victory, the landscape proved it, and the government testified of it. Before the American Revolution, the colonists existed within a determinant relationship with England. Since the time of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown in 1607, English politics governed the colonists and they participated in trade, importing English goods. Soon after the French and Indian War in 1763, tensions between England and the American colonies began to compromise their relationship and fan the fires of rebellion. Six events are often cited as catalysts of the Revolutionary War: the Stamp Act (1765), the Townshend Acts (1767), the Boston Massacre (1770), the Boston Tea Party (1773), the Coercive Acts (1774), and the Battle of Lexington and Concord (1775). Each of these disruptions altered the relationship between colonists and the English and resulted in a sublime experience.

Sublime experience or emotion occurs from a disruption in the Self's awareness of the Other through the perception of excess, danger, or unfamiliarity.⁴¹ The imposed acts (Stamp, Townshend, Coercive) were perceived as examples of English excess by the colonists. Physical altercations (Boston Massacre, Battle of Lexington and Concord) increased the perception of danger. Ultimately, the Declaration of Independence was drafted and later adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, to formalize America's more autonomous position with England. This document articulates

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155.

⁴¹ Weiskel, 24.

national elements that would give rise to the Americanization of the sublime throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

Flawed as it turned out to be for immigrants and people of color, the Declaration laid out the rhetoric of “one people” united with a common culture, purpose, and sense of loyalty to each other. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes the perceived effect of document, stating that “the Declaration helped to transform South Carolinians, Virginians, New Yorkers and other colonists into Americans.”⁴² Along with dissolving the “political bands” with England, the Declaration also states that America would assume a “separate and equal station” among the other “powers of the earth,” a position to which “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them.”⁴³ Slaveholder Thomas Jefferson hoped the Declaration would be a “signal of arousing men [of his class] to burst the chains, under which Monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.”⁴⁴ Although many people and nations would look to the United States as a model of political independence in the years following the revolution, the idea of artistic self-governance turned out to be as problematic for Americans, if not impossible, as the assurance that all people could be treated equally.

⁴² “The Legacy of the Declaration,” *Monticello*, <https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson/jefferson-s-three-greatest-achievements/the-declaration/the-legacy-of-the-declaration/>. Accessed November 6, 2019.

⁴³ *Thomas Jefferson, et al, July 4, Copy of Declaration of Independence*. -07-04, 1776. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/>.

⁴⁴ (Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Roger C. Weightman) Monticello, June 24, 1826. LOC <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/declara/rcwltr.html> accessed November 6, 2019. The “Spirit of ‘76” and its place within the American sublime is addressed in Chapter 4.

As a product of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking and aesthetics, several of the concepts found in the Declaration of Independence came from the writings of philosophers like John Locke (1632-1704), Montesquieu (1689-1755), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), and Thomas Paine (1737-1809). Although these philosophies were European by birth, they were seen as American in spirit, generated within the idealistic, foundational American government and psyche. Artists, writers, and composers, on the other hand, had no such document declaring their “separate and equal station” with Europe. Artistic autonomy needs more than political independence. Out of this need for autonomy, the sublime was adapted to fit the rhetoric of the new American experiment. It became a tool for composers, artists, and writers to assert independence, and even dominance, from and over European culture.

ARRIVAL: THE FIRST AMERICAN SUBLIME

Fueled by post-revolutionary nationalism, the vigorous marketing of exceptionalism, and the belief in a divinely influenced past and future, the first American sublime was born. This new brand of sublime supported the efforts of politicians, artists, writers, and composers to distinguish themselves from the other nations of the world. David Baker suggests two principle features that differentiate the Americanized form of the sublime from its European ancestor: the influence of the Transcendentalist movement and the nation’s unique landscape and geography.⁴⁵ Beginning in the 1820s and 30s, transcendentalism took root first among New England Congregationalists displeased with

⁴⁵ David Baker, “The Sublime: Origins and Definitions,” *The Georgia Review* 58, No. 2 (Summer 2004), 308.

the bleak Puritan beliefs in “inescapable human depravity.”⁴⁶ Russell Goodman observes that transcendentalists were “stimulated by English and German romanticism, the Biblical criticism of Herder and Schleiermacher, and the skepticism of Hume,” all of which made them “critics of their contemporary society for its unthinking conformity.”⁴⁷ Centered around Ralph Waldo Emerson, transcendentalism urged all people to find “an original relation to the universe,” one that Emerson believed stemmed from nature.⁴⁸ In the hands of writers like Emerson, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888) and daughter Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888), Nathaniel Hawthorn (1804-1864), and Walt Whitman (1819-1892), transcendentalism became a defining feature of American literature throughout the nineteenth century, even influencing twentieth-century writers like Carl Sandburg (1878-1967).⁴⁹

To illustrate the influence of transcendentalism on the sublime, Baker cites lines from section fourteen of Whitman’s “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” as an

⁴⁶ Russell Goodman, "Transcendentalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/transcendentalism/>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, edited by Richard Poirier (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3.

⁴⁹ While Hawthorne criticized transcendentalists in his novel *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), he lived among many at their utopian community at Brook Farm in 1841 and was heavily influenced by the movement as is evidenced in his novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). See Robert Todd Felton, “Hawthorne and Transcendentalism,” Lecture, The House of the Seven Gables Historic Site, Salem, MA, October 4, 2006. <http://hawthorneinsalem.org/ScholarsForum/MMD2635.html>.

example of “a new flavor of American hope, of self-reliant and progressive capability” that mirrors the rhetoric of American exceptionalism.⁵⁰ Baker states,

In this poem Whitman plumbs his life’s greatest challenge, figured both by the assassination of Lincoln and the potential failure of the American experiment. Here he faces not merely doubt, “the thought of death,” but obliteration, “the knowledge of death.” In the primordial swamp, where he flees, we find all the elements of the sublime—the treatment, the shocked awe, the overgrowth—though the topography itself is markedly different, its sunken “swamps” and flattened “recesses.” He must go “Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness, / To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still” where he discovers the healing song of the hermit thrush. But even more surprising, when Whitman finds his revitalization and eventually vacates the site of the sublimely erasing swamp, he reactivates two important qualities: his lost physical momentum, and a new, articulate capability and optimism.⁵¹

The regaining of lost momentum and the newfound optimism are what Baker identifies as uniquely American and what distinguishes Whitman’s poem, and many others, from the European romantic sublime. “The American sublime text pushes off, continues its journey,” states Baker. “Huck on the raft, Thoreau going back to work.”⁵²

Baker’s second distinction, the American landscape and geography, has similar connections to American hopefulness. Exemplified in the vastness of the prairie during westward expansion, the American sublime conveys a sense of endlessness, even an emptiness that is full of possibility. As Baker observes, “[T]his new America was both promising and terrifying for its horizon, its horizontal features. The new land seemed never to end, stretching across prairies, plateaus, mountains, all the way to the vanishing

⁵⁰ Baker, 308.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 309.

point of the ocean, which continued the linear destination beyond measure.”⁵³ The promise of this endlessness is apparent in the shouts of Manifest Destiny that defined much of the nineteenth century. To accommodate for the sublimity of endless possibility and expanse, poets like Whitman familiarized it through democratization and vernacularization, a task first begun by Emerson. Rob Wilson suggests that Whitman “confronts the geographical immensity and pluralistic maze of America” by focusing on the minutiae of the world around him.⁵⁴ As Whitman declared to his friend Richard Maurice Bucke, “After all, the great lesson is that no special natural sights—not Alps, Niagara, Yosemite or anything else—is more grand or more beautiful than the ordinary sunrise and sunset, earth and sky, the common trees and grass.”⁵⁵ Instead of one grand, sublime image, nature became a series of small, equally sublime parts.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE AMERICAN SUBLIME

The struggle between the poet or composer (Self) and the object or idea that triggers sublime feeling (Other), whether large or small, lies at the heart of the sublime experience. Traditionally, this experience was defined by feelings of terror, awe, or the imagined threat of annihilation, such as in the writings of Burke and Kant. However, in *The Romantic Sublime* (1976), Thomas Weiskel takes a step back from these early attempts to quantify the sublime and identifies three phrases that occur in an encounter

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Wilson, 138.

⁵⁵ Whitman quoted in Richard Maurice Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1901; repr., Philadelphia, PA: Innes & Son, 1905), 185. Citations refer to the 1905 edition.

between Self and Other. Referencing Kant primarily, Weiskel's phases are: 1) the Self and Other are in a determinate relation, 2) The relation is destroyed, 3) Equilibrium is restored.⁵⁶ Because the American sublime is an evolved form of its Romantic cousin, I have augmented Weiskel's model to account for the specific qualities unique to the sublime in the United States. Phases of the American sublime appear in Figure 1.1, followed by explanation.

Phases of the American Sublime

Theoretical Framework

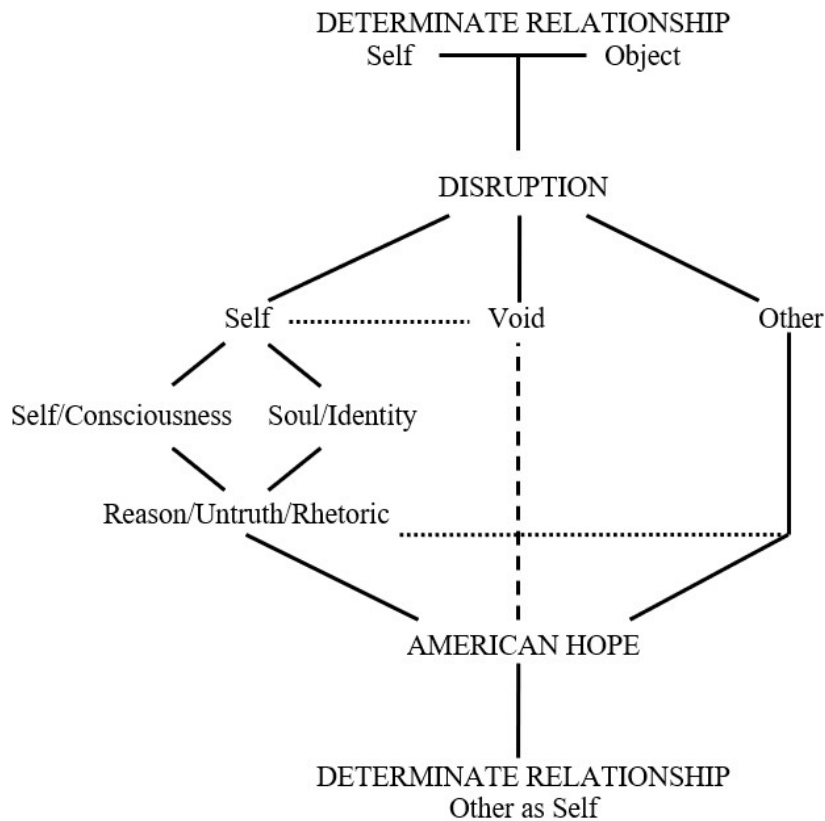


Figure 1.1. Phases of the Sublime.

⁵⁶ See Weiskel, 23-25.

Determinate Relationship

Before a sublime experience can occur, the Self must be in a determinate relationship with the object in question.⁵⁷ This perceptual relationship may be defined by ignorance, indifference, or familiarity in that the Self is unaware of the object, passively aware of the object, or so overly familiar with the object as to render the object obvious and therefore, unremarkable. As Weiskel states, “this relation is habitual, more or less unconscious (preconscious in Freudian terms), and harmonious.”⁵⁸ Recalling the Burkian perception of taste, the intensity of the relationship between Self and Other is directly linked to previous life experience, learned behavior, and education.⁵⁹ Ultimately, the level of knowledge or experience a person possesses directly influences the intensity and frequency of sublime experience. The sublime is thus a highly subjective experience.

Disruption

The sublime experience is triggered by a disruption in the Self’s perception of the object, thus rendering the object as Other. This disruption often causes a perception of excess, danger, or unfamiliarity. Describing this moment, Weiskel maintains, “Surprise or astonishment is the affective correlative, and there is an immediate intuition of a disconcerting disproportion between inner and outer. Either mind or object is suddenly in excess—and then both are, since their relation has become radically indeterminate.”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ I use the term “object” here to distinguish it from the Self. The object may be perceived as anything that acts as a catalyst for sublime feeling or experience: a waterfall, bird song, or xxx.

⁵⁸ Weiskel, 23.

⁵⁹ See Burke, 37.

⁶⁰ Weiskel, 23-34.

The effect is often disorienting and may lead to displeasure, unease, even anxiety. The reactions of nineteenth-century American artists to Niagara Falls or the mountain ranges of the American West illustrate this point. It is safely assumed artists like Edward Church and Albert Bierstadt had seen and experienced other waterfalls and mountains during their lifetimes. However, Church's *Niagara* (1857) and Bierstadt's painting *Among the Sierra Nevada, California* (1868) are significant representations of the sublime in American art. For these artists, the excessive scale of these natural wonders disrupted their perceptions of waterfalls and mountains; they attempted to capture that state of disrupted expectation on canvas. American culture likewise experienced disruption when revolution politically separated the nation from Europe and spurred the need for a distinct, independent culture.

Additionally, disruption may also occur when the Self's perception of the other becomes altered by a change in how the object functions. This type of shift in perception is most apparent in the poetry of Walt Whitman, where mundane objects such as flowers and household objects become the catalysts of sublime thought. While the sublimity of the mundane was celebrated by non-American writers such as the Englishman William Wordsworth, figures like Whitman and other American Transcendentalists demonstrate a different relationship with the Other than their peers across the pond. For Lake poets like William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), and Robert Southey (1774-1843) the characteristics of the sublime reflected the aesthetic taste of their time, place, and education. Among these characteristics, which Baker identifies as "fundamental adjustments" of eighteenth-century sublimity, are included "a valorization of nature over the social text, as over the machine," "a preference for the experience of

the individual over the group, or subjectivity over cultural wisdom,” and “a tone of high seriousness—melancholy being the ‘sublimest.’”⁶¹ The Transcendentalist, Americanized sublime still maintains an emphasis on nature. However, instead of placing nature outside or above society, the transcendentalist sees how nature serves society by reinforcing national rhetoric. Moreover, the focus changes from the individual to the collective through the democratization of the sublime. And lastly, hopefulness, characterized in this dissertation as American hope, overcomes melancholy when Self reconciles disruption.

Self/Void/Other

Following the disruption, the Self becomes estranged from the object-turned-Other. This distancing is due in part to an incapacity to perceive the “unfathomable” or “otherworldly” Other—whether that be Niagara Falls or one’s own politics of existence—as relatable to the Self.⁶² The metaphysical space that separates the Self and the Other is identified by transcendental writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Emily Dickinson as an “abyss” or a “void.” For the American composer, a void separated the sublimity of the European music tradition and those in the United States who were searching for a uniquely American voice. While composers Heinrich, Fry, Bristow, Wheelock, and Price each met distinctive versions of this obstacle and overcame disruption in order to achieve wholeness and restore determinacy, it must be stressed that the negotiation of the Self (as an American citizen) was much more complex for

⁶¹ Baker, 306.

⁶² Joanne Feir Diehl, “Emerson, Dickinson, and the Abyss,” *English Language History* 44, No. 4 (Winter 1977), 698.

Wheelock and Price because of the ways other perceived non-whites and women as second-class citizens. Chapter 5 follows some of the unique negotiations of ‘self against the dominant culture’ required of Wheelock and Price.

Self/Consciousness and Soul/Identity

Wilson’s description of the abyss identifies several critical repercussions. Once the Self is separated from the Other by the void, it experiences temporary stasis as the Self attempts to come to terms with its situation and its relation to the Other.⁶³ Wilson suggests that during this temporary stasis, the Self calls into question its existence, and the void acts as a “tabula rasa” on which a new relationship and identity is formed. In short, the abyss creates an identity crisis for the Self.⁶⁴ These moments of stasis are often marked by feelings of anxiety, inferiority, terror, anger, or awe. The discomfort of this experience motivates the Self to find resolution by any means possible. Overcoming the abyss allows the Self to find “a distinctly American poetic voice,” or in the case of music, an American musical voice.

Reason/Untruth/Rhetoric

Reason, especially science and religion, is believed capable of resolving the identity crisis of the Self, fills the void between it and the Other, and reconciles the two. For example, natural phenomena are partially explained and rationalized by documentation of erosion, geothermic activity, or evolution. What science cannot answer

⁶³ Baker, 308.

⁶⁴ See Douglas Shadle’s discussion on the identity crisis faced by American composers in *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

is often ascribed to the work of a divine hand. At other times, the Self employs untruths to create a new understanding of the Other and restore its identity as an object. Within the American sublime, untruths such as *E pluribus unum* or “all men are created equal,” are distinctly American, whether they are related to politics, nationalism, culture, or nostalgia. For example, during the nineteenth century, many Americans turned to Manifest Destiny to rationalize the decimation of Native American nations during westward expansion. Often these rationalizations, whether scientific, religious, or founded on untruths, are strengthened and perpetuated through the use of rhetoric. Importantly, the reasoning of one, no matter how flawed, can become the reasoning of many.

American Hope

In his original three-part organization of the sublime, Weiskel describes the reasoning process used to overcome the Void as establishing an equilibrium between Self and Other.⁶⁵ In this Romantic sense of the sublime, the Self accepts the Other for what it is and develops a relationship based on indifference or familiarity, ultimately retaining a sense of the stasis triggered by the initial disruption. This “habitual perception” causes the sublime to subside or collapse.⁶⁶ With equilibrium restored, the Other reverts to Object, and the Self is rescued from destruction. Conversely, with Americanized sublimity, American hope removes the possibility of equality between Self and Object. Baker describes American hope as the process of actively overcoming the object and

⁶⁵ Weiskel, 24.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

appropriating it to the Self.⁶⁷ This process must move forward in the face of adversity; it must prevail at any cost. It is guaranteed success. Wilson refers to this action as a “will to grandeur.”⁶⁸ American hope absorbs the object as part of the Self, and the Object then becomes a tool for Self-identification. The resulting determinate relationship is one in which the Self and the Object are the same. Niagara Falls, the Rocky Mountains, the prairie are no longer objects of nature; they *are* American.

IDENTIFYING THE AMERICAN SUBLIME

What is the process of identifying the sublime in American music? The specific characteristics of American sublimity are identified chiefly in the works of Mary Arensberg (1986), Rob Wilson (1991), David Baker (2004), and Chandos Michael Brown (2012). By compiling their multiple definitions and characteristics, I have developed several questions to help determine when attributes of the sublime are present. I preface them with these caveats. First, because the American sublime derives from the European, or Romantic sublime, several characteristics may be shared with artifacts of other nations. Additionally, these questions may be inadequate to identify instances of the sublime in the visual arts. Next, this closing section of the Introduction is a preview of sublime characteristics to be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. These questions by no means represent a comprehensive path to identifying the American sublime, but illustrate how the sublime was and is present in U. S. art works of the past and present. Finally, before identifying the sublime, one must consider the relationship of the artifacts

⁶⁷ Baker, 308.

⁶⁸ Wilson, 14.

to the culture in which the creator was working at the time, that culture's history, and also the sources of power within that culture. With these cultural contingencies in mind, the following questions are intended to guide the further discussion of the sublime when applied to American music.

Culture

Does the artifact: Address American ideology or thought?
Contain culture-specific elements?
Contain nationally-specific codes?
Address nature or geography as unique or exceptional, or elevate them to commodities.

History

Adapt or modify older musical traditions?
Show signs of appropriation?
Combine elements of the past with the present and(or) future?
Respond to other music(s)?
Show signs of nostalgia?
Transcend the ordinary?

Power

Represent or convey elements of power?
Address the empowerment of an American individual or group of people?
Idealize power?
Attempt to convince or persuade?
Promote American untruths?
Contain elements of or reference excess?
Display the ego of an American individual or population?
Convey cultural arrogance?

While a single artifact does not need every element to be considered sublime, the presence of any number of these may suggest the sublime is at play.

These questions help recognize certain tropes, including topography, landscapes, or natural phenomena seen in the U. S. outdoors; wildness or absence of refinement seen in the newness of the nation's people and politics; the void/abyss/nothingness represented either aurally or philosophically; disruption or separation, primarily in the separation of

Old and New Worlds or among races, classes, or genders; an emphasis on the horizontal, as represented by the prairie and westward expansion; American subjects whether real or fictional, including pilgrims, pioneers, mountain men, and tall tales; historical events such as wars or the signing of treaties; nationalistic rhetoric often derived from the nation's founding documents; and advances in technology seen in industrialization, transportation, or even nuclear warfare. These tropes and their ties to culture, history, and power, allow the American sublime to support a variety of ambitions, political positions, and agendas. When invoked by a specific group or organization, the sublime can promote both self and community empowerment, aggrandizement, or idealization. The American sublime perpetuates the idea that the environment shapes the individual and the community; it is implicated in nationalism and patriotism; and it reinforces the rejection of past beliefs, allegiances, and traditions by threatening limits and disrupting normalcy. National sublimity encompasses the country's multivariant faith and beliefs, its perceived powers, and supremacy—or rejection of them. It supports the creation of power from the bottom up. It can also reinforce the unquestioned success of the future regardless of the past and perpetuates the belief in the permanence of the United States as ideally conceived. Thus, the desired or expected results of referencing the American sublime include the bringing together of communities; the establishment of a domestic and/or international presence; the breaking down of established terminology and(or) tropes; a feeling of disorientation from the ordinary; a feeling of hope and perseverance; a sense of discovery or new opportunities; an understanding of the nation's progressive capabilities; the absence of sin/guilt/shame; and the democratization of objects, ideas, and cultures. The American sublime becomes a selective representation of the human condition.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS DISSERTATION

To illustrate how the American sublime may be used in musicological scholarship, each chapter of this dissertation focuses on a different phase of the sublime in relation to a composer and their music. While the sublime is equally applicable to all musical genres (a point I address in the Conclusion), I have chosen to limit my discussion of the American sublime to symphonic works because that genre represented one of the most significant forms of elitist cultural capital during the nineteenth century. As Shadle notes, “German-speaking musicians persistently claimed universal ownership of the symphony, and even of music itself. In doing so, they created an orbital model of musical culture in which non-Germans stood at the periphery around a Germanic center.”⁶⁹ This narrative of Self and Other, nation and identity, lies at the heart of American sublimity.

Additionally, the symphony’s history as a conduit for national identity contributes further relevancy to this study. Since the 1780s, the concept of different identities blending together has shaped the American psyche as reflected in the nation’s motto *E pluribus unum*—Out of many, one.⁷⁰ This ideology eventually became expressed as the monocultural metaphor of the “melting pot,” a term later popularized by the British Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill (1864-11926). Zangwill used the term for the title of his play *The Melting-Pot* (1908) which recounts the experiences of a Russian Jewish immigrant family in the United States.⁷¹ Through the perspective of the play’s principle

⁶⁹ Shadle, 4.

⁷⁰ *E pluribus unum* was in use in the United States as early as 1776, however it wasn’t until 1782 that congress approved its inclusion on the Great Seal.

⁷¹ Zangwill dedicated the play to Theodore Roosevelt, stating: “In respectful recognition of his strenuous struggle against the forces that threaten to shipwreck the Great Republic which carries mankind and its fortunes, this play is, by his kind permission, cordially dedicated.”

character, David Quixano, Zangwill defines America as, “God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming!”⁷² Contemplating the many different nationalities that immigrate to the United States, David declares,

Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to—these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians—into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American.⁷³

Over the course of the play, David expresses his sentiments by writing an “American symphony.” The symbolism of the symphony is used throughout the play to illustrate the “melting pot” ideology as the Old World (represented in the symphonic form) becomes a signifier of the New World. This is alluded to in David’s description of the profound effect America has on his music. “When I am writing my American symphony, [the music] seems like thunder crashing through a forest full of bird songs.”⁷⁴ This description is contrasted with the “thin and tinkling” music he writes when not inspired by the United States. Through David’s experience, Zangwill encapsulates a century of prior American symphonic writing and an ongoing practice in which the concept of the United States inspires composers to make sense of their emotions through music.

While there are many symphonic works that illustrate American sublimity, I have chosen to focus my study to the compositions of five individuals whose careers coincide with important developments in the American sublime. The first three case studies

⁷² Israel Zangwill, *The Melting-Pot* (Baltimore, MD: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1909).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

(Chapters Two, Three, and Four) address the development of the aesthetic as well as illustrate that the same trends taking place in art and literature occurred simultaneously in music. Chapter Five reaches beyond the predominantly white framework of the sublime to provide evidence of the implications of sublimity within the wider contexts of race, gender, and citizenship.

In Chapter Two, I examine the concept of determinacy and disruption through vignettes in the life and music of Anthony Philip Heinrich. Heinrich's implementation of the natural sublime mirrors that of visual artists like Thomas Cole and the writer William Cullen Bryant. His compositions, *The War of Elements and the Thundering of Niagara* and *Manitou Mysteries* illustrate Heinrich's attempt at developing a distinctly American voice through his connection to the nation's landscape, its people, and its history. Chapter Three follows the transition from the natural sublime to the domesticated sublime found in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman. In this chapter, I examine William Henry Fry's *Santa Claus* as an artifact of American play and imagination. In this symphony, elements of the comic and gothic provide further insight into the American sublime. My analysis of Fry's use of folk idioms also shows the process of acculturation to express national ideals. Next, in my study of George Frederick Bristow's Symphony No. 2, I examine how music engages with the sublime abyss. Here, I compare Bristow's music with the writings of Emerson, Whitman, and Dickinson through the composer's stylization of vernacularized dance and the politics of his quotationless autonomy in addressing the traditions of Western music. Finally, in Chapter Five, I contextualize the confrontation of untruths through the music of two marginalized composers. Both Dennison Wheelock and Florence Price confronted the concept of Americanness and

citizenship in a culture that would define their identity as both Self and Other. In that chapter, I address how diasporic double consciousness influenced their music and shaped their compositional voices. The Conclusion reflects on the continuous evolution of the American sublime through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the form of the deconstructed and nuclear sublimes. I also suggest areas of future application, particularly with texted music and popular genres.

The composers chosen as case studies address the complex history of identity formation for both American composers and the nation. Ultimately, their music represents some of the many ways composers use the sublime to empower themselves, their culture, and their country. Moreover, the sublime supports and enhances understanding of cultural trends and how they altered throughout American history. For these reasons and its continued relevance, the American sublime provides an ever-expanding vista from which to view the American musical enterprise.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROMANTIC IDEOLOGY OF ANTHONY PHILIP HEINRICH'S NATURAL SUBLIME

*How shall we crown the minstrel,
Who has brought us from the wild,
The melody that nature
Taught her free-souled mountain child?*

-M. E. Hewitt, "How Shall We Crown Him!"
(1846)

When Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781–1861) confronted the criticism and censure of American composers in the preface of his “opera prima,” *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky; or, the Pleasures of Harmony in the Solitude of Nature* in 1820, he emphasized the perilous nature of an all-too-Eurocentric taste that dominated musical culture in the United States. Finding the condition of American music saturated with “too many *Butterfly-effusions*,” Heinrich concluded that if American composers, himself included, were to contribute in the “crowded” and “difficult” firmament of Western music, American music must be rooted in the nation’s landscape.⁷⁵

[Composers], therefore, relying on the candour of the Public, will rest confident, that justice will be done, by due comparisons with the works of other Authors (celebrated for their merit, especially as regards Instrumental execution) but who have never, like him, been thrown, as it were, by discordant events, Far from the

⁷⁵ Anthony Philip Heinrich, *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky; or, the Pleasure of Harmony in the Solitudes of Nature* (Philadelphia, PA: Bacon & Hart, 1820), 2. The condition of music in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century reflected “postcolonial anxiety” of the nation. Much of the music was imported from Europe which resulted in a cosmopolitan type atmosphere and national cultural ambiguity. For a detailed analysis of the condition of American music during Heinrich’s lifetime see Douglas W. Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016.).

emporiums of musical science, into the isolated wilds of nature, where he invoked his Muse, tutored only by ALMA MATER.⁷⁶

Sublime traits fused to the Beethovenian symphony, often imported (sometimes by Heinrich himself)⁷⁷ with an overwhelming sense of *Sehnsucht des Unendlichen* (longing for the infinite) that accompanied German imagination, would not suffice to engender an American music capable of linking nature's sublimity with vernacular topics and tropes.⁷⁸ As Heinrich's music of natural sublimity would go on to show, the American sublime grew out of a disruption in the relationships among the United States, European symphonic music, and the American landscape and its inhabitants.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Anthony Philip Heinrich, *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky; or, the Pleasure of Harmony in the Solitudes of Nature* (Philadelphia, PA: Bacon & Hart, 1820), 2.

⁷⁷ Heinrich conducted the first known performance of a Beethoven symphony in America (Symphony no. 1) on November 12, 1817 in Lexington, Kentucky.

⁷⁸ Stephen Downes, "Beautiful and Sublime," in *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Downes (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 86. I use the terms natural, nature, and landscape throughout this chapter and elsewhere to refer to the romanticized perception of the natural world within the North American continent including forests, mountains, rivers, prairies, etc. This is in contrast to areas that have been settled or industrialized through cultivation or infrastructure. While there are different sub-categories of landscapes (cityscapes, farmscapes, mountainscapes), I use the term landscape to refer to the way that is was used throughout the nineteenth century, specifically "a portion of land or territory which the eye can comprehend in a single view, including mountains, rivers, lakes, and whatever the land contains." See Noah Webster, "Landscape," in *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/landscape>.

⁷⁹ While the term "American" can be problematic because of its multiple definitions and subjectivity, I use the term throughout this chapter as it refers to the way Heinrich would have recognized it. Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary defines American as "A native of America; originally applied to the aboriginals, or copper-colored races, found here by the Europeans; but now applied to the descendants of Europeans born in America." Webster also quotes George Washington in his definition, "The name *American* must always exalt the pride of patriotism." As such, "American" here refers to the white citizens of European decent. Indigenous people, although originally called Americans, would not be considered American citizens at this time and were thus perceived as Other.

AMERICANIZATION OF THE 'NATURAL' SUBLIME AESTHETIC

The appropriation of the natural sublime, or environmental sublime, as part of the American sublime marks the point at which the independence and exceptionalism that spurred the “Spirit of ‘76” and the geographical uniqueness of the environment merged under the pretenses of national and artistic identity. The Presbyterian minister Samuel Stanhope Smith, writing in 1810, attributed America’s “climate” to the unique pairing of geography and politics.⁸⁰ Smith articulated that this climate leaves a recognizable mark on those who live within it, a mark of “Americanness.” Over two centuries later, Chandos Brown describes “the great cultural work of the Anglophonic migration” to link geography with identity “was to render *terra incognita* into vernacular terms.”⁸¹ Brown further suggests,

[T]he American Revolution and the subsequent invention of the American state compelled Americans to expand their imagined geography to encompass both a physical environment – North America – and an emergent community conceived in revolution – the United States.⁸²

This disruption by revolution compelled Americans to view themselves and their environment differently. For nearly two generations, Americans relied on the diversity of the landscape to construct a national identity and subsequently, the natural sublime dominated America’s first focus on the sublime aesthetic from approximately 1820 to 1840. This initial phase, was itself, a result of the merger of three spirits: the ideological

⁸⁰ Chandos Michael Brown, “The First American Sublime,” in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to Present*, ed. Timothy M. Costelloe (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 147.

⁸¹ Brown, 147.

⁸² Brown, 147.

sublime of North American Protestantism, a fascination with the natural world, and the nationalist sublime propelled by the American Revolution.⁸³ Heinrich lived and worked at this crossroads.

Heinrich's *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky; or, the Pleasures of Harmony in the Solitude of Nature* mentioned earlier, was only the beginning of a career dedicated to the promotion of his own music and American exceptionalism, viewed through the natural sublime. Born in 1781 in Schönbüchel, Bohemia, Heinrich immigrated to the United States in 1816 after a failed attempt as an import-export merchant for the Austrian empire.⁸⁴ After two brief stints as the music director of theaters in Philadelphia, and later Pittsburgh, Heinrich traveled to Lexington, Kentucky in 1817 and soon after moved to Bardstown, Nelson County. In 1819, Heinrich relocated to a hemp plantation along Beargrass Creek named Farmington where he lived in a log cabin as a guest of the influential Judge John Speed and his family until approximately 1823.⁸⁵ Although he was not completely isolated from domestic comforts, Heinrich still felt he had developed a new relationship with the wooded landscape he encountered in Nelson County, which would have a noticeable impact on his composition and eventually, disrupt his perception of Western music. Forests, mountains, and rivers became his "muse," which he believed

⁸³ Refer to the Introduction of this study for an explanation of these phases.

⁸⁴ Douglas W. Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 35.

⁸⁵ Sixty enslaved people worked on the 550-acre Farmington plantation at the time Heinrich lived there. Heinrich dedicated several works to members of the Speed family or honored the Farmington estate: *Farmington March*, *Visit to Farmington*, *Farewell to Farmington*, *Hail to Kentucky*, and *The Birthday of Washington*. The latter was commissioned by John Speed. John E. Kleber, *The Encyclopedia of Louisville*, s.v. "Heinrich, Anthony Philip," (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), 380.

imbued his music with a distinctive quality not shared by his musical contemporaries, a quality that critics felt placed him “ahead of his age.”⁸⁶

Despite the assertions of uniqueness, Heinrich was part of a much greater movement within the United States that encompassed all the arts, from musical composition to painting to the written word. “Kindred spirits,” like the poet William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) and the landscape artists of the Hudson River School, primarily Thomas Cole (1801-1848), dedicated their careers to the mythmaking of American Nature which will evolve into a “symbolic opposition between Europe and America.”⁸⁷ Betty Chmaj observes, “In an era when ‘Truth to Nature’ was a ruling idea guiding landscape and genre painters alike, romantic and realist writers, Heinrich’s efforts in music accurately reflect the strivings of the age.”⁸⁸

To understand the relationship between the natural sublime and the American sublime and their influence on symphonic music of the United States, one must understand how the country’s geography shaped creative thought and its dominance as a source of national identity. To this end, I examine Heinrich alongside his artistic and literary contemporaries to help contextualize several of Heinrich’s American-themed compositions.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Shadle, 51. The quoted passage originally appeared in “City Items,” *New York Daily Times*, May 7, 1846.

⁸⁷ Betty E. Chmaj, “Father Heinrich as Kindred Spirit: or, How the Log-House Composer of Kentucky Became the Beethoven of America,” *American Studies* 24, no. 2 (1983): 39.

⁸⁸ Chmaj, 49-50.

IN SEARCH OF AUTHENTICITY

Born in a Massachusetts log cabin in 1794, William Cullen Bryant cultivated a relationship with nature that characterized his poetry and later, his writings as the editor of the *New York Evening Post* from 1827 to his death in 1878. Bryant's poems draw the American sublime into a "democratic and vernacularized terrain," which Rob Wilson defends "were piously [...] both contemplative and sublime in effect."⁸⁹ Wilson observes,

Bryant typically moved from subjective contemplation of natural imagery to an expansive mood of associated sublimity in which the idea or "high sentiment" of God emerged as the ideological trump card of any American sublimity.⁹⁰

This "immanent power of God" created a terrain that when curated by an American sense of entitled ownership justified the asserting of mountain ranges, rivers, and valleys, as artifacts of national identity regardless of the indigenous communities that called these places home.⁹¹ As Wilson affirms, "[Bryant] made vastness and wildness resonate with pious and national purposes. A sense of material and westward expansion had to be spiritually ratified [...]."⁹² Resultingly, the natural sublime was "negotiated as the site of self-empowerment" to buoy the American ego.⁹³ "Through such awe," writes Wilson, "wildness is tamed and interiorized in the heart, linking the wild to the good, and power

⁸⁹ Rob Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Genre* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 123.

⁹⁰ Wilson, 123.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 126.

to ethos.”⁹⁴ Here, “good” may be substituted with virtuous, righteous, and even honest—as illustrated by the 1850s reputation of “Honest Abe” Lincoln and his log cabin origins.

In the United States, the symbolism of the log cabin alluded to the related concepts of wildness and wilderness which played an influential part in the aesthetics of the nineteenth century. During Heinrich’s lifetime, wildness could refer to a number of different ideas. As a character trait, it could imply the extremes of savageness, brutality, or rudeness. Less aggressive qualities of wildness included the disposition to rove, irregularity of manners, an overactive imagination, and “the quality of being undisciplined, or not subjected to method or rules.”⁹⁵ Heinrich’s constant traveling, his tendency to speak his mind (which often resulted in frequent impassioned outbursts), and his unconventional composition practices accurately fit the definition of wildness in the early nineteenth century. When applied to the natural world, wildness denoted a “rough uncultivated state; as the wildness of a forest or heath.”⁹⁶ Wilderness, as it relates to wildness, is thus “a tract of land or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings, whether a forest or a wide barren plain.”⁹⁷ These definitions represent the predominant Euro-American perspective of natural wildness of the 1800s. The fact that the wilderness was perceived as “uninhabited by human beings” denies the existence of the indigenous

⁹⁴ Ibid., 127.

⁹⁵ Noah Webster, “Wildness,” in *The American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/wildness>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

peoples who inhabited much of the American “wilderness.” The perception of wildness or wilderness was regularly tied to religious, political, or economic ideology.⁹⁸ The positive role wildness assumed in the United States became a trope of American authenticity. The cabins of Heinrich, Bryant, and Lincoln thus signify the nation’s relationship with wildness (both natural and cultural) and displays an exploitation the environment that defined the country throughout the century.⁹⁹ Artists and politicians with ties to the log cabin or the wildness of the American frontier invented bonds with geography, a union which gave American identity its uniqueness. Those with wilderness (wildness) origins were perceived as more American in the Euro-American culture of the 1800s.

To this equation, in which the log cabin equated with wildness and those together signaled “Americanness,” was added a sanctification of wildness, itself tethered with the sublime trope of divine foreordination. This multi-valent cultural perception buoyed the valorization of wildness in the hearts of the American people. Heinrich’s curated experience in his Kentucky log cabin was sufficient to persuade critics to distance the European-born composer from his homeland and render him an American, even a cultural ambassador for the United States.¹⁰⁰ For Heinrich and his compatriots, wildness was a characteristic of American authenticity (see Figure 2.1).

⁹⁸ Brooks Toliver, “Eco-ing in the Canyon: Ferde Grofe’s Grand Canyon Suite and the Transformation of Wilderness,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, No. 2 (Summer 2004), 332.

⁹⁹ Other notable figures during the nineteenth century promoted their log-cabin origins for various political and artistic means. Figures include Henry David Thoreau, William Henry Harrison, and Franklin Pierce.

¹⁰⁰ Shadle, 36.

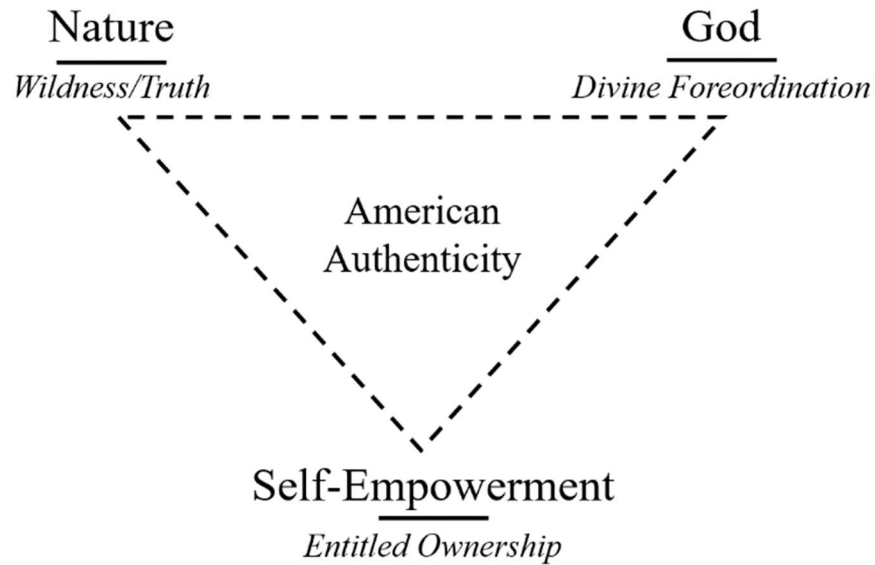


Figure 2.1. Defining relationships of the Natural Sublime in the United States during the early nineteenth century.

Addressing American wildness in 1836, artist Cole declared,

[Wildness] is the most distinctive, because in civilized Europe the primitive features of scenery have long since been destroyed or modified—the extensive forests that once overshadowed a great part of it have been felled—rugged mountains have been smoothed, and impetuous rivers turned from their courses to accommodate the tastes and necessities of a dense population—the once tangled wood is now a grassy lawn; the turbulent brook a navigable stream—crags that could not be removed have been crowned with towers, and the rudest valleys tamed by the plough.¹⁰¹

As a landscape artist, Cole imagines in the primeval North-American landscape distinct from the centuries of cultivation and manipulation subjected to European geography.¹⁰²

While several of Cole’s canvases indeed contain references of human presence in the wilderness, works like *A View of the Mountain Pass* (1839) situate the white settler’s

¹⁰¹ Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” *American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836), 3.

cabin as trivial, almost inconsequential, to the towering mount rising behind it.¹⁰³ The log cabin might as well have sprung naturally from the ground like the forests that surround it. The man on horseback seems to be as natural a part of his surroundings as any indigenous species. Here is an idealized nature and a symbolic figure of Americanness blended together in one circumscribed whole.¹⁰⁴

LANDSCAPE AND TASTE

The English-born Cole believed that American taste should differ from European taste just as their geographies differed from each other. “[The American landscape] is a subject that to every American ought to be of surpassing interest,” insisted Cole.

[F]or, whether he beholds the Hudson mingling waters with the Atlantic—explores the central wilds of this vast continent, or stands on the margin of the distant Oregon, he is still in the midst of American scenery—it is his own land; its beauty, its magnificence, its sublimity—all are his; and how undeserving of such a birthright, if he can turn towards it an unobserving eye, an unaffected heart!¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Absent from the image is the presences of indigenous peoples, suggesting that the sublime relationship between nature and humanity is limited to the white, Euro-American.

¹⁰⁴ One may also consider here the concept of the “tourist gaze” as outlined by John Urry. Urry argues that “tourism” consists of nine social practices characteristic of “modern” societies. Two are worth mentioning in relation to the sublime. First, “Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered.” And second, “The tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary. The viewing of such tourist sights often involves different forms of social patterning, with a much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape or townscape than normally found in everyday life.” See John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London, UK: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2003), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” *American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836), 2.

Cole's statement reflects widespread sentiments about the American landscape and the sense of ownership felt by his contemporaries as more artists concerned themselves with "cultivating a taste for scenery."¹⁰⁶ Cole defines taste as "the perception of the beautiful," and distinguishes between the artists and poets who see the "wondrous treasures" and "unfailing fountain of intellectual enjoyment" that comes from a "keener perception of the beauty of [their] existence," than those whose taste is not equally developed.

For those whose days are all consumed in the low pursuits of avarice, or the gaudy frivolities of fashion, unobservant of nature's loveliness, are unconscious of the harmony of creation—Heaven's roof to them is but a painted ceiling hung with lamps; No more—that lights them to their purposes—They wander "loose about," they nothing see, Themselves except, and creatures like themselves, short lived, short sighted.¹⁰⁷

Here Cole adheres to the belief that the refinement of taste afforded the Self a greater appreciation of the natural world. If one possessed the taste Cole advocated, vistas like the Hudson River Valley, the central prairies, and the seemingly endless Pacific Ocean extending from the western shore would inspire awe, even terror. These are the emotions, or sublime experiences, Cole attempted to capture in his paintings.

Cole's perspective echoes the writings of Anglo-Irish philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797), who asserted that the feelings associated with the sublime is a physiological response and should be examined accordingly. The relationship between the sublime and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. It is impossible to overlook Cole's assertion that silences generations of indigenous voices and claims that the land of North America is a "birthright." The general support of this assertion during Cole's lifetime and beyond, drastically affected indigenous peoples and their identity within the United States.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.

the Self's taste is similarity rooted in a physical experience. Burke argues—characteristically for his day—that the physiological or normal functions of living organisms and their parts, is not individual, but universal, citing that all humans are born with the same tastes, and therefore taste is fundamentally the same for all human beings.¹⁰⁸ What alters taste, Burke suggests, are life experiences, learned behaviors, and knowledge gained through formal education and study. The cultivation of taste adapts the raw sensation of experience into a personalized response that the Self might feel in many ways, anywhere from a direct or physical sensation to an imagined one. In this way, the Self develops relationships with its environment that may differ substantially from those of another, thus rendering taste a dynamic, albeit, a subjective issue.

Cole's writings inspired a group of New York City-based landscape artists that eventually became known as the Hudson River School.¹⁰⁹ Following Cole's death in 1848, Asher Brown Durand, a New Jersey-born artist and Cole's older contemporary, rose to the presidency of the National Academy of Design, and subsequently, the leader of the New York landscape painters.¹¹⁰ As the leader of the nation's principal arts institution, Durand "codified the standard of idealized naturalism" in a series of letters published in a monthly column for *The Crayon* between 1855 and 1856.¹¹¹ In these

¹⁰⁸ Edmund Burke, "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful with an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste, and Several other Additions," in *The Works of Edmund Burke*, Vol. I (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 37.

¹⁰⁹ The term "Hudson River School" first appears during the 1870s. Kevin J. Avery, "The Hudson River School." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd_hurs.htm (October 2004).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

letters, Durand advised artists about best practices for landscape painting and answered questions submitted from its readers. Like Cole, Durand acknowledged a force exerted on those who study nature and see it as their home.

The external appearance of this our dwelling-place, apart from its wondrous structure and functions that minister to our well-being, is fraught with lessons of high and holy meaning, only surpassed by the light of Revelation. It is impossible to contemplate with right-minded, reverent feeling, its inexpressible beauty and grandeur, for ever assuming now forms of impressiveness under the varying phases of cloud and sunshine, time and season, without arriving at the conviction, "That all of which we behold is full of blessings," that the Great Designer of these glorious pictures has placed them before us as types of the Divine attributes, and we were insensibly, as it were, in our daily contemplations, "To the beautiful order of his works to learn to conform the order of our lives."¹¹²

Just as Cole admonished "short-sighted" individuals who were unable to see the sublimity of nature, Durand likewise identifies the "right-minded" individuals with sufficiently developed taste to recognize the "Divine attributes" that he and other of the Hudson River School tried to capture on canvas.¹¹³ Brown summarizes this nineteenth-century pursuit of Divinity in nature. "To contemplate this tremendous landscape," he writes, "was to grasp God's design for a great nation."¹¹⁴

Although Cole distinguishes between "civilized" Europe and "primitive" America, his observations favor the untouched, the authentic, and the pure. Perhaps Heinrich is not far from Cole's way of thinking. The centuries of tradition, training, and treatises that form the foundation of Western music became too "civilized" for Heinrich,

¹¹² Durand.

¹¹³ "To the beautiful order of his works to learn to conform the order of our lives," is a direct quotation from William Cullen Bryant's poem, "A Forest Hymn," (1824).

¹¹⁴ Brown, 162.

who was entrenched in the wildness narrative of American originality. He saw the symphonies of European composers as too smooth or too grassy. The sublime crag of the symphony had been topped with the tower of Beethoven. Perhaps for these reasons, Heinrich sought a different path.

WILDNESS

Heinrich's compositional origins from a secluded log cabin borrowed from the symbol of the medieval hermit's cave and mystical communal with God and nature.¹¹⁵

The British hymnodist Benjamin Gough (1805-1877) poeticized of Heinrich,

When hermit-like and hid from vulgar view,
Thy spirit first its mighty impulse drew,
Twelve weary months within a sunless cave,
'Twas this that sweetened solitude, and gave—
What worldly mildews never can destroy—
A gush of fresh unutterable joy!
(Benjamin Gough, "To a Musical Enthusiast," *Morning Advertiser*, August 24, 1831)

Gough bestows a margin of sainthood that aligns with the composer's moniker of "Father Heinrich." Just as the ancient Fathers of the Catholic church established foundational theological and intellectual doctrines, Heinrich is repeatedly situated as a founder of American music, or as Harold Schonberg called him, "a brash apostle of an emergent America."¹¹⁶ Gough further lends Heinrich the qualities of impulsiveness, freshness, and

¹¹⁵ Heinrich referred to his time in Kentucky as his "hermitage." Quoted in Herbert Holl, "Some Versions of Pastoral in American Music" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1980), 216. Consider also Henry David Thoreau (1817-1962) and his cabin experience at Waldon Pond. from 1845 to 1847.

¹¹⁶ Harold C. Schonberg, "Music," *The New York Times*, March 11, 1973. Schoenberg's statement recalls the concept of instrumental music as religion that became popular during the nineteenth century, particularly regarding the music of Beethoven and Wagner. Virinder S. Kalra observes that, "This notion of music as religion was developed through a process of elevation of the [musical] work through theological

joyfulness, suggesting a feral uniqueness not experienced in the music of other composers; a uniqueness he ascribes to the composer's spiritual intimacy with Nature.

Within Gough's poem, Heinrich's music redefines what music *is*:

Say what is music? Is it not the thrill
That sorrow checks not—death can never kill,
That dwells in thunder's deep and awful voice.
And makes the choral gales of spring rejoice;
The poesy of sounds—the rich—the wild—
Creation's herald—Nature's loveliest child!
(Benjamin Gough, "To a Musical Enthusiast," *Morning Advertiser*, August 24, 1831)

Here is music that originates from thunder, unconcerned with the rules of harmony.

Chmaj suggests this new type of music rooted in the wildness perceived in their environment by Euro-Americans nature "counted for more than *science* and *restraint*."¹¹⁷

The natural sublime provided Heinrich with a "stimulus to loftier voice," or the means to ascribe a divine origin to his music, justifying his departure from "well-worn stylistic paths," or wildness.¹¹⁸ The natural sublime, as Wilson argues, "is used to serve as one means of evoking the infinite and even trans-social force of Jehovah, praising power that can somehow empower."¹¹⁹ If Heinrich could legitimize the wildness of his music through his relationship to nature, and as such, the divine, he could cast off the millstones of European symphonists that hung around the necks of American composers. Just as it

interpretative frameworks; artists became priests mediating the absolute for the public and concert halls of the new churches." See Virinder S. Kalra, *Sacred and Secular Musics: A Postcolonial Approach* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 25.

¹¹⁷ Chmaj, 46. Emphasis is original.

¹¹⁸ Wilson, 96.; Shadle, 55.

¹¹⁹ Wilson, 96.

had for Bryant and Cole, the power provided by the natural sublime solidified into an “ideological trump card.”¹²⁰ For Heinrich, this was easier said than done. Writing to the composer in 1842, the English tenor John Braham lamented, “I regret the Public have not yet done justice to your genius—There is a wildness, an originality—in your musical effusion that would delight a Cultivated audience.”¹²¹ Braham, likely unfamiliar with the extent of audience cultivation in the United States, was overly optimistic.

While Bryant and Cole became recognized for their “democratic vistas of immensity” that rivaled their European counterparts, Heinrich struggled to receive recognition as anything more than a subversive imitation of European “masters.”¹²² Critics like the Bostonian John Sullivan Dwight (1813-1893) refused to buy into the superiority of American wildness in musical composition despite the successes experienced by writers and artists. Von Glahn suggests Dwight’s perspective was “oriented toward the East Coast (and Europe), not the West.”¹²³ As a result, Heinrich’s focus on the Western frontier estranged him from Dwight’s expectations. Dwight bemoaned Heinrich’s efforts “to paint pictures” of the American landscape through music and urged him to stick to European models of absolute unadulterated music.¹²⁴ Citing

¹²⁰ Ibid., 123.

¹²¹ Quoted in Holl, 219. Originally Anthony Philip Heinrich, *Scrapbook*, 425. From a letter written by John Braham.

¹²² Shadle, 9.

¹²³ Denise Von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 11.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Shadle, 53.

Beethoven as the supreme example of how a composer should draw inspiration from the natural world, Dwight shows little tolerance for Heinrich's wildness.

Mr. Heinrich belongs to the romantic class, who wish to attach a story to everything they do. Mere outward scenes and histories seem to have occupied the mind of the composer too much, and to have disturbed the pure spontaneous inspiration of his melodies [...] Beethoven had no *programme* to his symphonies, intended no description, with the single exception of the *Pastorale*; yet, how full of meaning are they!¹²⁵

Although Heinrich found Dwight's comments infuriating; he knew he was not Beethoven incarnate. In 1840, Heinrich declared in a letter to his biographer, "I conclude by subscribing myself not the 'Beethoven of the age,' but simply the log-house composer of Kentucky."¹²⁶

The debate about Heinrich's identity mirrors larger issues within the United States that are explored in Douglas Shadle's monograph, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise*. Shadle observes, "The awkward postcolonial condition in which Americans found themselves at the turn of the nineteenth century led many of them to believe they were experiencing an identity crisis, musical and otherwise."¹²⁷ The crisis caused by the inability of composers and critics to agree on an American musical identity created a fissure in musical taste, igniting disagreements

¹²⁵ John Sullivan Dwight, "Musical Review. 'Father Heinrich' in Boston," *Harbinger* (July 4, 1846): 58-59.

¹²⁶ Anthony Philip Heinrich, letter August 18, 1840. Quoted in Holl, 218.

¹²⁷ Shadle, 7.

about what American symphonic music could, or should, be.¹²⁸ Within this void, Heinrich composed his music.¹²⁹

AMERICAN POWER

Beginning in the 1830s, Heinrich composed thirteen symphonic works over twenty years, many of which reference the American geography or people associated with the nation's landscape. Heinrich's first symphonic work to overtly reference the natural sublime is his *Der Kampf des Condor, amerikanisch charakteristisches Tongemählde* (*The Battle of the Condor, American Characteristic Tone-picture*), later renamed *The Ornithological Combat of Kings*. John Herron describes the work as a combination of "national mythology, natural science, and impressions of nature" that "create a distinctive American aesthetic."¹³⁰ Following its premiere in Vienna on June 9, 1836, August Mandel, secretary of the Musick-Verein, commented:

Heinrich's muse is the daughter of Nature, but not that Nature whose quiet, idyllic grace possesses us all unconsciously. He has sought out Nature in her workshop where she produces her mighty works, where great bridges of rock are thrown across streams; where rivers, broad as seas, flow out of undiscovered sources over

¹²⁸ George Frederick Bristow, *Symphony no. 2 in D minor, op. 24 ("Jullien")*, *Recent Researches in American Music*, Vol. 72, edited by Katherine K. Preston (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2011), xciv.

¹²⁹ See Chapters 3 and 4 for more information concerning the void and its relationship to the sublime and symphonic music of the United States. Throughout the nineteenth century, the state of music in the United States was part of an ongoing discussion between composers, musicians, and critics who often promoted conflicting viewpoints. While some like the Boston critic John Sullivan Dwight vied for the superiority of Germanic music and encouraged composers to follow its example, others, like William Henry Fry (discussed in Chapter Three) looked for new approaches to distinguish American music from that which was imported from Europe. The resulting rift caused an identity crisis for many composers in the country. This negotiation of identities is addressed in Douglas Shadle's book *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹³⁰ John Herron, "Nature Sounds: Anthony Philip Heinrich and the Music of American Environment," *Environmental History* 21 (2016): 630.

hundreds of miles to the ocean itself; where great lakes plunge with deafening roar to the depths below, and the tornado, with its crashing strength lays bare the impenetrable secrets of the primeval forests.¹³¹

Although Viennese audiences were not strangers to natural phenomena referenced in music such as Haydn's "Chaos" from *Die Schöpfung* (1797-98) and the storm in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony (1802-08), this familiarity did not make the overall impression of Heinrich's music any less idiosyncratic. Mandel does not cite specific locations in the excerpt quoted above; however, his analogous descriptions demonstrate knowledge of North-American geography. "Bridges of rock" "thrown across streams" recalls Natural Bridge in Virginia, deemed one of the "Natural Wonders of the Modern World."¹³² "Rivers, broad as seas" that flow for "hundreds of miles to the ocean" could refer to the Hudson or Mississippi rivers. "Great lakes" that "plunge with deafening roar to the depths below" – the closest Mandel comes to referring to a specific location – alludes to the Great Lakes and Niagara Falls. Later in the same review, Mandel specifically refers to Heinrich's "orchestra scores" as "broad as the falls of Niagara."¹³³

¹³¹ Quoted in translation in William Treat Upton, *Anthony Philip Heinrich: A Nineteenth-Century Composer in America* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1939), 143. Also, Michael Broyles, *Mavericks and Others Traditions in American Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 63. And Shadle, 41.

¹³² Purchased by Thomas Jefferson from England in 1774 for twenty shillings, Natural Bridge soon became a tourist destination for Europeans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jefferson referred to the bridge as "the most Sublime of nature's works." The arch was painted by numerous times throughout the nineteenth century. Notable artists include Jacob Caleb Ward in 1835, Frederic Edwin Church in 1852, and David Johnson in 1860. Herman Melville alludes to the arch in his novel, *Moby Dick*, comparing a breaching whale to its characteristic curve. American literary figure, William Cullen Bryant, referred to Natural Bridge and Niagara Falls as the two most remarkable features of North America.

¹³³ Quoted in translation in Upton, 143.

It comes as no surprise that Mandel would reference Natural Bridge and Niagara Falls in referring to Heinrich's Americanness. Writing in 1872, Bryant labeled Natural Bridge and Niagara Falls as "the most remarkable curiosities in North America," exceptionally beautiful, but "mingled with sublimity."¹³⁴

Whatever traveler came to the Western World, to compare its natural grandeur with the grandeur of art and architecture in the countries he had left, went first, in the North, to the Falls of Niagara, and, in the South, to the world-famous bridge.¹³⁵

Images portraying these natural phenomena circulated through Europe long before the United States' independence. As symbols of North America, both Natural Bridge and Niagara Falls were internationally recognized and used by foreign critics like Mandel to distinguish between the Old and New Worlds.

Although both natural phenomena played on the imaginations of many who saw them, the sight and sound of Niagara proved to be the most significant throughout the nineteenth century. Sometime between 1831 and 1845, Heinrich composed a programmatic symphonic work inspired by the Falls, which he called *The War of Elements and the Thundering of Niagara*. This was not the first time the cataract's roar was portrayed in music. The Norwegian violinist and composer Ole Bull (1810-1880) wrote a piece for violin solo and orchestra entitled *Niagara* in 1844. Later representations of the falls include William Henry Fry's *Niagara Symphony* (1854) and George Frederick

¹³⁴ William Cullen Bryant, *Picturesque America: Or, The Land We Live In* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1894), 40.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

Bristow's *Niagara: Symphony for Grand Orchestra and Chorus* (1893). Denise Von Glahn asserts that that Heinrich, Fry, and Bristow

[A]ttempted to capture what no visual artist could; their works celebrated the powerful *sound* heard at the Falls [...] They composed large works befitting the colossal spectacle. All of these works required augmented forces and were multisectional, indications of the power and multiformity that composers associated with the Falls.¹³⁶

The intensity of sound produced by the 3,160 tons of water that flows over Niagara Falls every second is referenced in many of the accounts of its visitors. However, exaggerated tales of its deafening sublimity spread to the extent that by the 1720s, it was commonly assumed that the Falls overpowered all other sounds for approximately a thirty-mile radius.¹³⁷

Exaggerations of the Falls' power only bolstered its sublime reputation throughout the nineteenth century. Works like Heinrich's *Thundering of Niagara* symbolize his admiration for the seemingly uncontrollable power of the natural world. While both visual artists, poets, and composers preserved their admiration for the Falls through their respective artistic media, Von Glahn observes that music attempted to do what no other medium could: mimic the sounds of the falls themselves.¹³⁸ Perhaps the

¹³⁶ Emphasis is original. Denise Van Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 23.

¹³⁷ Paul Dudley, *An Account of the Falls of the River Niagara, taken at Albany, Oct. 10, 1721, from M. Borassaw, A French Native of Canada* in Charles Hutton, George Shaw, and Richard Pearson, *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London from their Commencement, in 1665, to the Year 1800* Vol. VI (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1809), 575.

¹³⁸ Von Glahn, 23.



Figure 2.2. *Niagara*. Oil on canvas by Frederic Edwin Church, 1857. Corcoran Collection, courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. 2014.79.10.

most iconic painting of the Falls from the middle of the nineteenth century is Frederic Edwin Church's *Niagara* (1857) (see Figure 2.2).

Church's painting is the first visual representation of the Falls in a "grand scale, with such fine detail, naturalism, and immediacy."¹³⁹ The canvas is 101.6 × 229.9 cm (40 × 90 1/2 in.), twice as wide as it is high. Sheer dimension heightens the panoramic expansiveness of the scene.¹⁴⁰ Further,

[Church] pushed the plane of the falls nearest the viewer significantly downward to reveal more of the far side as well as the dramatic rush of water. Most notably,

¹³⁹ "Niagara," National Gallery of Art, accessed December 19, 2019, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.166436.html#overview>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

he eliminated any suggestion of a foreground, allowing the viewer to experience the scene as if precariously positioned on the brink of the falls.¹⁴¹

In spite of its scale and perspective, Church's painting lacks one of the principal characteristics of the Falls – its sound. An anonymous observer at the exhibition of the work in 1857 aptly declared, "This *is* Niagara, with the roar left out!"¹⁴²

Church's Niagara is incapable of producing the sound of the Falls by itself; however, it suggests the presence of imagined sound. However, Church's painting will "sound" different to someone who has only a cursory knowledge of the Falls than to someone who has experienced the cataract first hand. The resulting sensory, and as such, emotional experience, can vary greatly. How then, does an artist make the intentional experience of the sublime reproducible?

To answer this question, some artists turned to language to reinforce the intent of their art. Predating Church by thirty-two years is Edward Hicks's *The Falls of Niagara* (1825). While the scope of the painting is not as considerable as Church's—Hicks seems to obscure the Falls with images of a beaver, rattlesnake, eagle, and moose among a variety of trees and shrubs—Hicks places a greater emphasis on sound. An excerpt from a poem by Alexander Wilson encompasses the scene and includes direct references to the sonic nature of the Falls (see Figure 2.3).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Quoted in Nancy Mowll Mathews, Charles Musser, and Marta Braun, *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880-1910* (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press LLC, 2005), 56. The quoted passage originally appeared in *Home Journal*, May 9, 1857, 2. Italics are original to the article.



Figure 2.3. *The Falls of Niagara*. Oil on canvas by Edward Hicks, ca. 1825. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 62.256.3.

With uproar hideous' first the Falls appear,
 The stunning tumult thundering on the ear.
 Above, below, where'er the astonished eye
 Turns to behold, new opening wonders lie,
 This great o'erwhelming work of awful Time
 In all its dread magnificence sublime,
 Rises on our view, amid a crashing roar
 That bids us kneel, and Time's great God adore.
 (Alexander Wilson, "The Foresters," ca. 1809-1810)

Hicks's inclusion of Wilson's poem invites the observer to hear the "hideous" and "crashing" roar and experience the "thundering on the ear."

Other nineteenth-century poets tried to encapsulate the sound of Niagara Falls in their writings, all with similar, albeit different, descriptive approaches. J. B. Waid, known as the "Bard of Niagara," fills his description of the Niagara River with vivid action and sound as it approaches the Falls followed the resulting calm (See Appendix A). In Waid's encounter with the Fall's sound, the "pleasant, peaceful, quiet river" gives way to the thunderous crashing of "furious waters." Although the sounds last for only a moment before returning to a hushed whisper, so affecting is the experience, what remains with the poet in spite of reality is the Fall's "deaf'ning thunder" as imagined sound.

James Lynn Alexander's (1801-1879) poem "Wonders of the West; or, A Day at the Falls of Niagara in 1825" describes a group of travelers as they encounter Niagara Falls for the first time.

Now, with unwonted labour spent,
Behold them on the monument;
Where, to the traveler below,
Each seems no larger than a crow.
The summit gain'd, the ladies scream,
And shrink from the appalling scene;
While some in terror shut their eyes,
And some look upward to the skies.
To hide their distance from the ground,
Nor dare to cast their eyes around.
(James Lynne Alexander. Stanza X, *Wonders of the West, or, A Day at the Falls of Niagara in 1825, a Poem by A Canadian*. 1825)

Alexander's placement of screams within the soundscape of the cataract frames the traveler's instinctive reaction as a naturally occurring phenomenon in concurrence with the sound of the Falls themselves. Here the sublime is inescapable.

Heinrich's *The War of the Elements and the Thundering of Niagara* (1831-45) occupies a position between Hicks' sound-encircled folk-art and Church's water-dominant, yet silent and motionless canvas. "Heinrich provided a composer's solution to the problem of background and foreground, proportion, perspective and focus," asserts Von Glahn.¹⁴³ What Heinrich achieved is not a simultaneous experience like Hicks's painting where the falls are experienced all at one, but a successive experience that pulls the observer from one moment to the next through the musical events of the composition. Heinrich's Niagara overcomes limitations of movement and sound through music and takes on additional symbolism.

Heinrich's "Capriccio Grande," the *Thundering of Niagara* is scored for a full orchestra with augmented brass and percussion sections. In addition to winds and strings, the score calls for three piccolos, four horns, four trumpets, and alto, tenor, and bass trombones. Heinrich's percussive forces include parts for timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, and tambourine. The thirty individual parts often play together at the same time, heightening a sense of acoustic sublimity. The approximately eleven-minute work is written as a single movement; however, frequent fermatas, grand pauses, and tempo changes divide the work into smaller sections: (Adagio largo, Allegro moderato, Poco piu mosso, Andantino, Allegro primo, and Allegro—Coda). Closer analysis shows Heinrich's awareness of large-scale forms and his effort to create unity throughout the work. Harmonic, textural, and rhythmic motives recall previous moments, thus creating a sense of internal consistency. The composer's evocation of "thundering"

¹⁴³ Von Glahn, 31.

occurs in the work's "semi-autonomous" coda (mm.333-507) which accounts for over one-third of the work.¹⁴⁴ The Coda begins *piano*, mirroring Waid's "pleasant, peaceful, quiet river." The tranquility of the coda soon gives way to *forte*, *fortissimo*, and triple *forte* dynamics that persist to the end of the work. Where Waid is left with only the remembered sound of the Falls, Heinrich sustains the sound until the last note.

Heinrich's composition has been analyzed at different times. The first effort, by William Treat Upton (1939), divides the piece into three sections – an introduction, a main section, and a coda. Upton's analysis focuses primarily on the first portion of the work and the various melodic devices used by Heinrich.¹⁴⁵ In keeping with her generation's musicological concerns, Von Glahn's supplemental analysis (2003) offers a hermeneutical layer and emphasizes the work's relationship to nature through the relationship of sound and power.¹⁴⁶ Here I will expound further on Von Glahn's work and focus my remarks on the coda.

Heinrich's perspective of Niagara is that of a downward gaze. This perspective became the prominent viewpoint of the Hudson River School of painters like Cole and Durand discussed earlier. Brooks Toliver notes that this perspective celebrates both wilderness and the will to dominate it.¹⁴⁷ Here the sublime manifests through Heinrich's response to the power of the falls. The triple-forte dynamics, droning brass, and

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴⁵ Upton, 240-44.

¹⁴⁶ Von Glahn, 25-35.

¹⁴⁷ Brooks Toliver, "Eco-ing in the Canyon: Ferde Grofe's Grand Canyon Suite and the Transformation of Wilderness," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, No. 2 (Summer 2004), 342.

[Allegro]

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The woodwind section includes Piccolo 1-3, Flute 1-3, Oboe 1, 2, Clarinet 1, 2, and Bassoon 1, 2. The brass section includes Horn 1, 2 and 3, 4, Trumpet 1, 2 and 3, 4, Alto Trombone, Tenor Trombone, and Bass Trombone. The percussion section includes Timpani, Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Triangle, Cymbal, and Tambourine. The string section includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello/Contrabass. The score is marked with a tempo of [Allegro] and a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo). The music features complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across all sections.

Figure 2.4. Anthony Philip Heinrich, *The War of the Elements and the Thundering of Niagara*. Coda, mm. 402-6. Kallisti Music Press edition, 1994.

constantly running scales assume the roaring sound of constantly falling water (see Figure 2.4). This intensity and persistence of sound overtakes the listener much like getting hit with a wave; as Von Glahn writes, “the power of the Falls becomes the music.”¹⁴⁸ The wildness of the scene threatens to destroy. However, Heinrich keeps the experience under his control, symbolically asserting his own power over that of nature. The cataract’s reputation as an American phenomenon, coupled with Heinrich’s self-promotion as an American composer identifies the power of conquest represented in the music as American power. Rob Wilson’s comment that the sublime is a “genre of empowerment” comes alive in Heinrich’s portrayal of Niagara Falls.¹⁴⁹ The ceaseless flow of the water represented by rising and falling scales becomes the perpetual forward momentum, or Manifest Destiny, of the United States. The thundering roar of the Falls represented by Heinrich’s densely constructed walls of sound becomes the booming voice of the American people and their leaders, even the voice of God. This assertion of natural, cultural, political, and economic power underpins the American sublime.¹⁵⁰

Unlike his earlier Americanist works like *The Dawning of Music* and *Der Kampf des Condor*, Heinrich’s *The War of the Elements and the Thundering of Niagara* allegorizes a naturally occurring phenomenon well-known to European and American audiences. The post-Independence anxieties of Heinrich’s America spurred questions of national identity and cultural autonomy that occupied the minds of artists, writers, and

¹⁴⁸ Von Glahn, 34.

¹⁴⁹ Wilson, 169.

¹⁵⁰ Non-American composers have also used waterfalls to musically allude to national rhetoric. Jón Leifs’ *Detifoss* (1964) is a more recent expression of nationalism through referencing a natural phenomenon.

composers. What the natural sublime brought into artistic expression was a blending of “pastoral contrast, historical awareness, and Romantic impulse” that laid the foundation for art, poetry, and music that was “uniquely American.”¹⁵¹

ANTIQUITY AS AUTHENTICITY

Writing in 1815, the Boston lawyer and literary figure, William Tudor (1750-1819) provided a list of appropriate topics for the nation’s authors. Among his suggestions are the American landscape, distinctive native fauna, such as the beaver, deer and eagle, and the “human actors on this theater” with “their history replete with interest and romantick adventure.”¹⁵² Much like Niagara’s trans-Atlantic reputation thundered “America” to those who were familiar with it, so did the voices of those who had inhabited the land for generations. Among Heinrich’s compositions idealizing the natural world are several works that focus on specific people and their relationship with North American geography. Principle characters included himself, the pilgrims, and the various indigenous peoples. In autobiographical works such as the “orchestral tone poem” *The Wildwood Troubadour: Auto Biography Overture Chivaleresque*, Heinrich musically portrays his discovery of “the genius of harmony slumbering in the forest shades of America.”¹⁵³ In *The Oratorio of the Pilgrims, or the Wildwood Spirit’s Chant*, Heinrich’s

¹⁵¹ Holl, 264.

¹⁵² Quoted in Mark Niemeyer, “From Savage to Sublime (And Partway Back): Indians and Antiquity in Early Nineteenth-Century American Literature,” *Transatlantica* 2 (2015): 6.

¹⁵³ Holl, 239. *The Wildwood Troubadour* was frequently performed during Heinrich’s lifetime in Boston and New York. One reviewer in the *Musical World and New York Musical Times* noted, “This Festive Overture, ‘The Wildwood Troubadour,’ answers the end contemplated by its author. Without any of the somber harmonies or sudden transitions, which are peculiar to the Beethoven and Von Weber school, it

focus is on the relationship between America and the people who inhabit it. Heinrich's symphonic works on Native American themes include *Pushmataha: A Venerable Chief of a Western Tribe of Indians*, *The Indian Carnival*, or "The Indian Festival of Dreams," *Manitou Mysteries*, *of the Voice of the Great Spirit* (ca. 1845), and *The Mastodon* (1845). In each of these works, Heinrich unites his subjects to the natural sublime through the idea of sublime rapture or "sacred transport" in an attempt to create a specific time and place for the observer.¹⁵⁴ Sublime rapture elevates geography in America "as a scene of sacred presence," changing a "lowly 'rural scene'" into an awe inspiring experience of "sublime persuasion."¹⁵⁵ Whether it is a hermit in his cabin, a pilgrim on the frontier, or a Native American community in the wilderness, Heinrich used these subjects as encoded representations of American exceptionalism to persuade the hearer of a "romantic antiquity" that acts as a source of national power.

I focus the remainder of this chapter on Heinrich's works on Native American subjects. Robert Berkhofer Jr. affirms that between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, Native Americans were elevated to "literary and artistic respectability" by authors like James Fenimore Cooper (*The Pioneers*, 1823; *The Last of the Mohicans*, 1826) (1789-1851) and Washington Irving (*Traits of Indian Character*, 1819; *A Tour of the Prairies*, 1835) (1783-1859) who used native peoples to "conjure the authenticating power of

gives to the impartial, unprejudiced listener a faithful picture of the forest home of the self-reliant Western man, by means of simple harmonies united to melodies highly florid [...] The harmony reminds one of Mozart and Haydn; but the orchestral treatment is to the last degree original." *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* (April 30, 1853).

¹⁵⁴ Wilson, 102.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

antiquity.”¹⁵⁶ Deemed by modern scholars as “sentimental” and “unflattering” or “odd,” Heinrich’s Indian symphonies are reflections of “his commitment to the products of the American environment.”¹⁵⁷ John Herron observes, “[Heinrich’s] compositions, like the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and the paintings of Thomas Cole, portrayed native peoples as romantic characters existing within an untainted landscape.”¹⁵⁸ Referencing Michael Broyles, Herron also notes that as an “*American topic*,” “few subjects combined the required ingredients better—‘romanticism, exoticism, nature, and America itself’—than native peoples living in an idealized physical environment.”¹⁵⁹ How then, does the inclusion of native peoples in white Americanist artifacts such as Heinrich’s music, Cole’s paintings, and Cooper’s novels contribute to an American aesthetic? If a population paradoxically viewed as “non-American” could play such an important role in the development of American identity during the nineteenth century, perhaps the same could be said for Heinrich, a non-native American from Bohemia.

In spite of the extent to which Heinrich and his contemporaries went in establishing ancient roots, the United States had an uneasy relationship with history. While an idyllic past was attractive, the lust for future development was inescapable. Thomas Cole observed,

¹⁵⁶ Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1979), 86.

¹⁵⁷ John Herron, “Nature Sounds: Anthony Philip Heinrich and the Music of American Environment,” *Environmental History* 21 (2016): 628.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Michael Broyles, *Mavericks and Other Traditions in American Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 58, 56. See also Herron, 628.

[T]he great struggle for freedom has sanctified many a spot, and many a mountain, stream, and rock has its legend, worthy of poet's pen or the painter's pencil. But American associations are not so much of the past as of the present and the future [...] Looking over [the American landscape], the mind's eye may see far into futurity. Where the wolf roams, the plough shall glisten; on the gray crag shall rise temple and tower—mighty deeds shall be done in the now pathless wilderness; and poets yet unborn shall sanctify the soil.¹⁶⁰

What is missing from Cole's prophecy are the people who live "where the wolf roams," the people that already see the "gray crag" as sacred ground, and the people who have walked forest paths for generations. Cole's failure to consider Native Americans reflects the belief that native peoples, like the landscape, are not historical actors, but merely things acted upon.¹⁶¹

Willful ignorance of the new Nation's pre-Columbian history included the impression that Native Americans did not have a history.¹⁶² In his novel, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada* (1851), Francis Parkman generalizes "rational observations" once common among white populations:

Some races of men seem molded in wax, soft and melting [...] Some races, like some metals, combine the greatest flexibility with the greatest strength. But the Indian is hewn out of a rock. You cannot change the form without destruction of the substance.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Cole, 7.

¹⁶¹ For a detailed analysis of the widespread perceptions of Native Americans during the nineteenth century, refer to Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹⁶² Steven Conn, *History's Shadow* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 6.

¹⁶³ Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada*, 9th ed. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1891), 39-45.

Steven Conn suggests that Parkman's remarks insist "that Indians were incapable of changing."¹⁶⁴ Clarifying, Conn asserts, "Without saying so directly, by sculpting Indians in immutable stone [Parkman] has underscored for his readers that Indians do not operate in the flow of history."¹⁶⁵

In any case, even if Native Americans were a part of the country's wilderness in the past, they were, in the minds of the European settlers, not part of its future—Manifest Destiny did not include the Native Americans. From today's perspective, extinction seems to have been the only possible fate for native peoples in the eyes of America's colonizers. But their alleged lack of a future did not align well with the infallible success prophesied by the nation's supporters. Conn wrote in 2004 that, "the story of inevitable, fated extinction could not be the central plot of any romantic history. American history could be a romance only because Native Americans had been removed, not so much from the story as from history itself."¹⁶⁶ The perceived non-history and non-future of Native Americans provided a *tabula rasa* on which American history could be written. Such exclusion prompted sympathy from many of the country's artists, poets, and composers. Heinrich took note of the changing dynamics between the landscape and its inhabitants in the preface to a collection of songs, airs, and waltzes titled *The Western Minstrel* (1820).

¹⁶⁴ Conn, 209.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

[T]he yell of the war-whoop has become tacet [...] the whistling of the tomahawk and other *Furiosos* of the ruthless savage ceased to vibrate, scarcely any other strains are heard than the music of the ax, the hammer's din or the cadence of the Banjo.¹⁶⁷

Heinrich's observation of native peoples suggests his inclinations as a composer. Here he focuses exclusively on sonic events. The "yell of the war-whoop," the "whistling of the tomahawk," and the audible vibrations of "*furiosos*" are no longer present in Heinrich's imagined soundscape.¹⁶⁸ By contrasting these sounds with the more modern sounds of the ax, hammer, and banjo, Heinrich is conjuring a space in antiquity that is neither fact nor fiction, but the American Arcadia.

MANITOU MYSTERIES: ADOPTING A HISTORY

Heinrich's perception of native peoples stemmed partially from his own experiences with Native Americans such as the Shawnee, Mingo, and Cherokee people along the Ohio River and later in life, the writings of contemporary authors such as Prince Maximilian von Wied-Neuwied (1782–1867) and ethnographer John McIntosh.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Anthony Philip Heinrich, *The Western Minstrel, A Collection of Original Moral, Patriotic, and Sentimental Songs* (Philadelphia, PA: Bacon & Co., 1820), 1.

¹⁶⁸ Herbert Hull notes that by the time Heinrich entered his Kentucky log cabin in the 1820s, "Indians were being forced westward and in Heinrich's well-populated corner of the state the threat of Indian violence must not have been imminent." Hull, 218.

¹⁶⁹ Michaels Broyles notes that Heinrich's interest in Native American subjects appears to have started about 1830 and continued throughout the decade. Both books by Prince Maximilian and McIntosh were published in 1843. As such, Broyles notes about Heinrich's earlier works on Native American subjects, "[Heinrich may have learned from McIntosh and Maximilian, but they were neither his inspiration nor his impetus. Something else motivated him." Broyles suggests that for his earlier works, Heinrich may have received inspiration from two popular plays, James Nelson Baker's *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808) and John Augustus Stone's *Metamora: or The Last of the Wampanoags* (1829). See Broyles, 59.

His first symphony, *Manitou Mysteries, or the Voice of the Great Spirit: Gran sinfonia misteriosa-indiana* (1845) appears to draw from descriptions of Native American religious practices in McIntosh's *The Origin of the North American Indians* (1843).¹⁷⁰ However, Douglas Shadle suggests, "Despite the elaborate title and mystical subject, the symphony is Heinrich's most traditional."¹⁷¹ Unlike Heinrich's other symphonies, *Manitou Mysteries* lacks descriptive subheadings; he provides only conventional designations for each movement: *Adagio assai-Allegretto moderato* (F Major), *Minuetto: Allegro guisto* (A-flat Major), *Adagio* (C Major), and *Finale: Allegro assai, quasi presto* (C Major). The approximately thirty-minuet work is scored for a large orchestra of winds (piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons), brass (four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, serpent, ophicleide), percussion (timpani, triangle, side drum, bass drum), and strings. The combination of the enigmatic title, lack of programmatic elements, and the absence of overt references to Indianist stereotypes contribute to a sense of the sublime through the disruption of past and present, Self and Other.

Throughout the symphony, Heinrich (Self) attempts to reconcile the disruption caused by the mysticism of the Manitou (Other). McIntosh describes the Manitous in his book as "subaltern spirits," closely linked with nature, "who are the objects of worship," specifically among the Algonquin, indigenous inhabitants of the area now known as Quebec and Ontario.¹⁷² Traditionally, the Algonquin directed songs of thanksgiving

¹⁷⁰ Shadle, 45.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² The Algonquin form part of a larger population known as the Anishinaabek and are closely related culturally and linguistically to the Odawa and Ojibwe people. John McIntosh, *Origin of the North American Indians* (New York, NY: Nafis & Cornish, 1843), 105.

towards the “*Kitchi Manitou*” (Great Spirit) following hunting, fishing, gathering, and harvesting.¹⁷³ Life events were also accompanied by expressions of gratitude to the Manitou. “These were mediums through which elders passed on traditions to the younger generation,” notes Daniel Laxer.¹⁷⁴ “Personal ceremonies for naming, the first hunt, marriage, war, as well as group ceremonies such as the Feast of the Dead and thanksgiving in spring and autumn all prominently possess songs and dances accompanied by rattles and/or drums.”¹⁷⁵ The Manitou are spirits that are sung to, and as a result, *Manitou Mysteries* suggests a reversal of roles. Heinrich seems to imply that his *Allegri*, *Minuets*, and *Adagios*, in all their Eurocentricity, are representative of the voice of the Great Spirit (see Figure 2.5).¹⁷⁶ The resulting effect verges on the satirical or kitsch, as in the sentimental melody in Figure 2.5. Stephen Downes argues that kitsch “exhibits a beauty that seems unrealistically pure, immaculate or simplistic, or lays its overt knowledge of traditional forms and techniques on with the thickest trowel around.”¹⁷⁷ Here Heinrich displays his knowledge of European techniques but does so in

¹⁷³ Daniel Robert Laxer, “Listening to the Fur Trade: Sound, Music, and Dance in Northern North America 1760-1840” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2015), 85.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 85–86.

¹⁷⁶ Douglas Shadle suggests this “voice” is most apparent in the work’s third movement *Adagio*. Referring to the movement’s “broad melody” doubled by a solo horn and the first violins (mm. 9-14), Shadle describes the affect “as if a thick fog gives way to the voice of the Great Spirit.” Shadle, 45.

¹⁷⁷ Stephen Downes, “Beautiful and Sublime,” in *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 100.

The image displays a musical score for the Adagio movement of *Manitu Mysteries, III*. The score is written for five instruments: Solo Horn in C, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Contrabass. The Solo Horn part is marked 'Solo' and begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The Violin I part also starts with a *p* dynamic and features a melodic line with some grace notes. The Violin II part plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass parts provide harmonic support with various rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including *p* markings. The score is in common time (C) and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Figure 2.5. Anthony Philip Heinrich, *Manitou Mysteries*, III: The Adagio, mm.9-14. Horn solo depicting the Great Spirit.

a way that is removed from the subject of the symphony. The symphony is not a song of gratitude or thanksgiving to the Manitou, but the voice of the Manitou speaking to the American people, and it speaks with a European accent. Just as the perceived non-history of native peoples could be sporadically appropriated when convenient for a utopian American history, Heinrich could apply his own voice to the Manitou.

Heinrich’s two other symphonies on Native American subjects are more typical of the composer’s programmatic inclinations. Each contains vivid allusions to festivals, political events, and places that create a “cinematic” effect.¹⁷⁸ “[L]isteners are to become viewers,” notes Shadle, “as Heinrich weaves the story with music.”¹⁷⁹ Heinrich’s

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

insertion of himself into each work as Manitou, Nature, storyteller, and curator suggest that these symphonies are semi-autobiographical. They thus align with his efforts of acculturation to identify with American subjects and geography to create an encompassing narrative of antiquity and self-empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The sublime is not a “delightful or contemplative experience of nature.”¹⁸⁰ Emily Brady asserts that “the sublime does not define a relationship of loving nature, or even a friendly relationship with nature,” instead it is “uncomfortable, even difficult.”¹⁸¹ This type of relationship is evident in Heinrich’s symphonies in which he was dealing with something much larger than himself: the concept of America. For Heinrich, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, and people defined what the United States was and where it originated. Heinrich as Self confronted this new world and the exotic otherness that it represented. The internal and external sense of displacement he experienced with North American people and places, and the criticism heaped upon him disrupted his perception of the symphony and Western music generally. As a result, Heinrich dedicated his compositional career to grappling with his primary autobiographical question: the disruption between Self and Other, internal and external, old and new, European and American, culture and nature. Although discrepancies of taste among his sympathizers

¹⁸⁰ Emily Brady, “The Environmental Sublime,” in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy M. Costelloe (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 180.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

and his critics rendered almost all of his music inconsequential during his lifetime, many of Heinrich's works remain accurate representations of American thought and emotion during the early nineteenth century. Chmaj unashamedly declares that, "[Heinrich] is the one composer who tried to do for American music what the landscape painters did for painting, the Nature writer for literature, and to make that attempt with the orchestra."¹⁸²

Beyond Chmaj's hyperbole, indeed Heinrich's contributions should be regarded along the same lines as those of his contemporaries, namely Bryant, Cole, Church, and Cooper.

Their alignment of natural sublimity with wildness, power, and antiquity as expressed on canvas, in prose, and in music contributed to and accurately reflected the sense of

American exceptionalism that defined what it meant to be authentically American.

¹⁸² Chmaj, 55.

CHAPTER 3

THE DOMESTICATED SUBLIME OF WILLIAM HENRY FRY'S *SANTA CLAUS: CHRISTMAS SYMPHONY*

*The steady friend of virtuous youth,
The friend of duty, and of truth,
Each Christmas eve he joys to come
Where peace and love have made their home.*

—C. C. Moore, "Old Santeclaus with Much
Delight"¹⁸³

“Walt Whitman became the American sublime in 1855.”¹⁸⁴ This statement by the poet and scholar Rob Wilson indicates what he sees as the distillation of “national grandeur and unity into a single citizen.”¹⁸⁵ The year 1855 saw the New York-born Whitman (1819–92) publish *Leaves of Grass*, a collection of poetry that Whitman describes in his notebook as a type of history or encyclopedia, and even “The Great Construction of the New Bible.”¹⁸⁶ Whitman’s historicized prose “dis-covers” the past by resurrecting the dead, “for the future is but the past realized.”¹⁸⁷ Whitman notes in the preface that

¹⁸³ Clement Clarke Moore, “Old Santeclaus with Much Delight,” *The Children's Friend: A New-Year's Present, to the Little Ones from Five to Twelve* (New York, NY: William B. Gilley, 1821).

¹⁸⁴ Rob Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 134.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Walt Whitman, *The Complete Writings*, edited by Richard Maurice Bucke, et al. (New York, NY: Putnam's, 1902), 6.

¹⁸⁷ Joseph Kronick, “On the Border of History: Whitman and the American Sublime,” in *The American Sublime* edited by Mary Arensberg (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 62.

The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet [...] he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson [...] he places himself where the future becomes the present.¹⁸⁸

Whitman's present included the resurrected forms of William Cullen Bryant's natural sublime but emerged "tamer" as "an egalitarian voice representing big feelings and commonplace ideas."¹⁸⁹ In contrast, "all prior American versions" of American sublimity, argues Wilson, "seemed wishful tonality more than earthly fact."¹⁹⁰

Exemplified by *Leaves of Grass*, a new form of the sublime had taken root within American aesthetics by the 1850s. Although the characteristics of the natural sublime remained a substantial part of the American rhetoric, the realities of the everyday gained prominence in philosophical thought. Domesticated subjects became the focus of imagination and grist for artistic inspiration. Only two years before Whitman published his collection of poems, the Philadelphia-born composer and music critic William Henry Fry (1813–64) wrote a symphony embracing this new focus on the ordinary.¹⁹¹ Fry's *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony* (1853) reflects nearly half a century of molding the religious icon, St. Nicholas, into a symbol of American youth, love, and imagination. This chapter shows how Fry's symphony, along with the writings of his literary

¹⁸⁸ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Readers Edition*, edited by Harold W. Blodgett and Scully Bradley (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1965), 718.

¹⁸⁹ Wilson, 135.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ There is some discrepancy regarding the year Fry was born. An obituary and several life sketches provide 1815 as the year of his birth. However, Fry's grave marker at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia specifies 1813, a date provided by Fry's brother Horace, some thirty years after his brother's death. Fry's biographer, William Treat Upton confirms 1813 as the accurate birth year.

contemporaries such as Washington Irving (1783–1859) and Nathaniel Hawthorn (1804–64), situate concepts of childhood, imagination, and play within the discourse of national identity at mid-century.¹⁹²

DEFINING THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA

By the time *Santa Claus* premiered on 24 December 1853, Fry already had a clear view of the direction music in the United States needed to take if it were ever to declare independence from Europe. This direction, he wrote, included “Romance, Religion, the elements, [and] Nature,” and offered “new fields for genius in music.”¹⁹³ Much like Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781–1861) of the previous generation, Fry considered the nation’s geography, religion, and politics uniquely American and altogether distinct from Europe. These traits formed the muses of originality that Fry admonished others to heed. Stressing the importance of innovation, Fry clarified that the “new fields” of composition must arise from “genius and not conformity—it must spring from a musical pope and not a musical pewholder.”¹⁹⁴ Fry considered himself such a leader.

If I thought the classic models perfect and unalterable, I would not write at all, or be their obedient orang-outang; [...] there are but two things in this world—substance and shadow—and a man is either the one or the other, I would not play shadow.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Fry’s symphonies are categorized as Tone Poems by William Treat Upton.

¹⁹³ William Henry Fry, “Mr. Fry’s Letter to Mr. Willis,” *Dwight’s Journal of Music* (Boston, MA), February 4, 1854, 140. Originally printed in the *New York Musical World and Times*.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 139. Fry is referring to the orangutan.

Here Fry denounces any accusation of “monkey see, monkey do” from his critics, but nearly ten years earlier, Fry’s convictions had been somewhat softer.

In an 1845 review of a symphony by his mentor, the French conductor and composer Leopold Meignen (1793–1873), Fry discussed how one could “take received knowledge” and transform it into “innovative creativity”:

We may, and must, import true models from Europe; but taking as our standard the recognized excellence or perfection of the masters in Art of that country, we must then originate, re-create, and accord our derived taste and skill to the genius of our own hemisphere. It is alone by this double process that we can make our country the actual mother, as well as the double foster mother of Art.¹⁹⁶

In striking contrast to the declaration he would make a decade later, Fry here acknowledges the “perfection” of European music. Douglas Shadle interpreted Fry’s “double process” as “translation” or “using a filter to transform something distinctly *not* American into something that is.”¹⁹⁷ Fry’s suggestion that the “perfection” of European “masters” needed to be altered—translated—by American composers if they wished to become part of Western music’s genealogy, hints at the imitative primate he condemned in 1854. The change in Fry’s perception of European music was the result of a six-year residency spent across the Atlantic Ocean. From 1846 to 1852, Fry lived in Paris, where he experienced firsthand the latest operas, visual art, and architecture. He also attended the London Great Exhibition in 1851 and witnessed the rise of the Second French Republic (1848–70) under the regime of Napoleon III (1808–73). These events left a

¹⁹⁶ William Henry Fry, “Mr. Meignen’s Concert,” *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 21, 1845. Quoted in Douglas W. Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 57.

¹⁹⁷ Shadle, 57.

lasting imprint on Fry's view of nationality and the role of politics, culture, and human nature in the formation of individual and collective identity.

Fry's European years disrupted his perceptions of the United States' role in the trans-Atlantic relationship with Europe, which opened a widening void between himself and the world of Western music he once viewed as perfect. He was forced to reevaluate and redefine his artistic positions and tastes. He penned a critique to Abbot Lawrence (1792–1855), the American minister to Great Britain from 1848 to 1852, stressing that Lawrence had failed to act appropriately as a representative of the United States and that he lacked “true American Spirit.”¹⁹⁸

The American abroad, and above all the American representatives, should be the American and nothing else. He is without figure of speech a sovereign and therefore finds no elevation up to factitious rank by means of stale gawd and glitter. Let him teach dukes and earls that in so far as they are titled subjects they are inferior to an untitled sovereign. And how is he to do this? By quiet simplicity – but not following the lying proverb – in Rome do as Rome does – but by doing as man enfranchised should do.¹⁹⁹

The Fry of 1854 thus professed a right to a leadership role that he believed all citizens of the United States enjoyed, regardless of title or position. “Fry rarely relinquished an opportunity to tout U.S. democracy,” observes Shadle, even at the expense of his hosts.²⁰⁰

Fry's 1854 remarks reflect his time in Paris, but now they are explicitly focused on the musical aristocracy.

¹⁹⁸ William Treat Upton, *William Henry Fry: American Journalist and Composer-Critic* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1954), 64.

¹⁹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Shadle, 64.

But every such composer has considered it beneath the dignity of his mission, servilely to copy pre-existing forms, and follow in the steps of his “illustrious predecessors,” as the critics always and invariably would have him do, ramming authorities down his throat, when he feels that he could teach those authorities.²⁰¹

For Fry, political sovereignty naturally extended to the American composer and their music.

While attending the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations held at London’s Hyde Park from 1 May to 15 October 1851, Fry again bemoaned the lack of American spirit represented in the United States’ contributions. Critics, too, lamented an emphasis he considered too reliant on American industry in the exhibit, calling it “matter of fact” and describing it as more a “display of goods for purchase than of articles of taste and art for exhibition.”²⁰² Fry agreed that the assemblage had a “certain dry puritanism” and conceded that “Beauty is not considered [...] as an integral portion of what we produce.”²⁰³ While the perceived lack of beauty was a blow to American aesthetics, Fry was unapologetic.

“We cannot send our American Spirit to the fair.” That spirit lies in our penny press, our free advertising, our ‘telegraph which makes thoughts blaze as lightning and materialize the soul of the nation like nerves of sensation to the body politic.’ It lies in our workman’s axe – our plows, which ‘tear the virgin soil’ – our huge lakes and rivers, steamers which make the Union the wonder and hope of the world. It lies in local activity – each town and township formulating its own legislation. It lies in talent for Association, in which private efforts combine for the greatest undertakings.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Fry, 139.

²⁰² Quoted in Upton, 68.

²⁰³ Quoted in Ibid.

²⁰⁴ If Fry was quoting, the source is unknown. Upton, 68-69.

Far more important than beauty in Fry's assessment of American creativity is the domesticated, everyday practicality of American life, imbued with "wonder and hope": his era's American sublime.

After his return to the United States in 1852, Fry became an increasingly vocal advocate for American artistic independence. As Shadle observes, Fry perceived that "Americans lacked only originality and independence of thought, and these defects could be corrected by moving away from European trends and focusing on what was truly American and good."²⁰⁵ To highlight this "good," Fry devised a series of eleven lectures given at New York's Metropolitan Hall on the "history of the rise, progress and present state of all departments of instrumental and vocal music."²⁰⁶ These lectures positioned the music of Palestrina, Pergolesi, Handel, Haydn, and Puccini alongside Greek and Chinese "hymns," while highlighting his own compositions to demonstrate what he saw as the future of music in the United States. The domesticated natural sublime also played heavily into Fry's thoughts on American music. Predating Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* by three years, Fry expressed his transcendentalist beliefs in his first lecture.

When we shall have invented an instrument to detect the minute world of sounds, which now refuse our comparatively large measure of hearing, miniature nature, to us now silent, shall teem with them; the poor worm that we tread upon shall writhe with a dying moan; the fighting animalculae in a drop of water shall have their battle-chorus; and even the sunbeams, as they rush from their hot center to warm chilly Earth, shall carry with them a love-song.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Shadle, 66.

²⁰⁶ Quoted in Ibid.

²⁰⁷ "Sketches of Lectures," *New York Tribune*, December 1, 1852. It is worth noting that Fry's prediction foreshadows the music of soundscape composers like Luc Ferrari (1929-2005), R. Murry Schafer (1933-), Hildegard Westerkamp (1946-), and David Dunn (1984-).

With this music, performed by the world around him, Fry viewed the future of music. He insists that it is up to “the gifted and the conscientious” artist to render these sounds “sensible” so that they might become “available to society as more tangible things.”²⁰⁸ This sense of responsibility to translate the world around him into vernacular terms, would further widen the distinction between the old (Europe) and the new (America). With these thoughts at the forefront of his mind, his experiences in Paris, and an ever-increasing fury of American exceptionalism building pressure within him, *Santa Claus* loomed on the horizon.

THE AMERICANIZATION OF SANTA CLAUS

When the French conductor and composer Louis-Antoine Jullien (1812-1860) arrived in the United States in August 1853, he offered Fry the opportunity to write a symphonic work that was “undeniably American.”²⁰⁹ But why would the composer be drawn to Santa Claus? If Fry wished to provide Jullien with an American work, more obvious subjects could be found; after all, the United States was not the only country in the world to celebrate Christmas in 1853 and the focus on one religion would undermine the idea of religious freedom and pluralism. Was Fry merely playing to the sentiments of the white Christian American public by writing a Christmas work for a Christmas Eve

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Laura Moore Pruett, “A Christmas Eve to Remember: William Henry Fry’s ‘Santa Claus’ Symphony,” in *“Hands-On” Musicology: Essays in Honor of Jeffery Kite-Powell*, ed. Allen Scott (Ann Arbor, MI: Steglein Publishing, Inc., 2012), 356.

premier?²¹⁰ Fry's zealous commitment to intentionality and his view of the arts in the United States suggest otherwise. Shadle contends that in *Santa Claus*, "Fry challenged commonly held conceptions of the nature of the symphony, arguing that its form should follow a dramatic literary narrative rather than a conventional schema or plot, and that representational musical gestures should point listeners toward deeper philosophical meanings."²¹¹ The history of Santa Claus supports that he is not a thing of nature, nor does he belong to any one nation, religion, or time. However, Fry's Santa Claus embodies youthfulness, hopefulness, wonder, and imagination—traits Fry associated with the American spirit. In this regard, Fry's *Santa Claus* is America itself.

By the time Fry approached the subject of Santa Claus in 1853, the saintly figure had come a long way, literally and figuratively, from his beginnings on the shores of the Mediterranean. Catholic tradition holds that Saint Nicholas was born in 270 CE in the Greek seaport of Patara, Lycia (present-day Turkey). Little is known about the life of the saint; extant documentation was written in the sixth century, nearly two centuries after his death in 343 CE. Legends detailing Nicholas's miracles spread throughout the lands bordering the Mediterranean, and by the year 1100, the cult of Saint Nicholas had gained such a substantial following that only the Blessed Virgin Mary surpassed his influence.²¹²

²¹⁰ The subject of the Christian celebration of Christmas as the theme of the symphony does not recognize the possible diversity of Fry's audiences. With increasing numbers of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe settling in the Eastern United States between 1815 and 1865, various religions and traditions would have been present in the nation's urban centers.

²¹¹ Douglas W. Shadle, "How Santa Claus Became a Slave Driver: The Work of Print Culture in a Nineteenth-Century Musical Controversy," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 8, no. 4 (2014): 502-503.

²¹² Gerry Bowler, *Santa Claus: A Biography* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2005), 13.

In these early years, Nicholas (meaning “people’s victory) was primarily venerated as a “wonder worker” who saved countless soldiers, sailors, and children.²¹³ Gerry Bowler asserts that “Nicholas could be counted on to come to the aid of those who called on his name, be they Christians, Jews, or Muslims and other ‘unbelievers.’”²¹⁴ Nicholas’s impartiality made him a favorite among many different people and cultures for a variety of uses. The breadth of his patronage manifests this versatility. At various times, Nicholas was the protector of apothecaries, Austrians, bakers, barrel-makers, Belgians, boatmen, boot-blacks, brewers, brides, butchers, button-makers, dock workers, Dutchmen, firemen, fishermen, florists, Greeks, grooms, haberdashers, judges, merchants, murders, notaries, old maids, orphans, parish clerks, paupers, perfumers, pirates, poets, Russians, thieves, and wavers.²¹⁵ Among these factions, it was the Dutch who brought Nicholas aboard the ship *Halve Maen* to North American shores in 1609.

In his book, *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* (1809), Washington Irving blends historical events with mythmaking to dramatize the earliest days of New York, then called New Amsterdam. Much like the “forgotten” history of Heinrich’s *Manitou*, Irving manipulated the “forgotten” history of the area to situate Dutch settlers as authors of an “infant city” in a “new” land.²¹⁶ Irving’s biographer, Andrew Burstein, aptly observes, “They [the Dutch] were clay to be molded

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 17.

²¹⁶ Washington Irving, *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 151.

by the author's [Irving's] hands."²¹⁷ Situated prominently on Irving's spinning potter's wheel is Saint Nicholas. Irving wrote,

Thus, having quietly settled themselves down, and provided for their own comfort, they bethought themselves of testifying their gratitude to the great and good St. Nicholas, for his protecting care, in guiding them to this delectable abode. To this end they built a fair and goodly chapel within the fort, which they consecrated to his name; whereupon he immediately took the town of New Amsterdam under his peculiar patronage, and he has ever since been, and I devoutly hope will ever be, the titular saint of this excellent city.²¹⁸

With St. Nicholas's ever-expanding patronage, New York became home to all the rituals and festivities associated with his guardianship, particularly those tied to his feast day, 6 December. Irving provides one of the earliest descriptions of these events in the United States.

At this early period was instituted that pious ceremony, still religiously observed in all our ancient families of the right breed, of hanging up a stocking in the chimney on St. Nicholas eve; which stocking is always found in the morning miraculously filled; for the good St. Nicholas has ever been a great giver of gifts, particularly to children.²¹⁹

Irving's sympathetic descriptions of devotion to children mark a significant point in the developing observance of Christmas in the United States. In 1809 there was no commonly recognized Christmas holiday in America.²²⁰ Saint Nicholas appeared under various guises in the early nineteenth century: the German Pelznickle and Aschen Claus,

²¹⁷ Andrew Burstein, *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2007), 75.

²¹⁸ Irving, 150. Saint Nicholas remains the patron saint of New York City.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Burstein, 86.

who reminded children that “their sins merited a good thrashing.”²²¹ Perhaps the most peculiar depiction of the saint is from a booklet promoting P.T. Barnum’s 1850 tour with the Swedish soprano, Jenny Lind (1820-1887) (Figure 3.1). In this image, Saint Nicholas appears dressed as George Washington, flying on a broomstick with Lind along for the ride.



Figure 3.1. *Santa Claus and Jenny Lind*. Attributed to P.T. Barnum, 1850.

²²¹ Bowler, 25.

These different apparitions of Saint Nicholas attest to the influence of Irving's *History* in foregrounding Saint Nicholas as a symbol that the United States could adopt as its own. Bowler notes that Irving's *History* "made the author a famous man and Saint Nicholas an American."²²² Likewise, Burstein observes, "The public that loved his *History* simply could not forget his pure and good-humored St. Nick [...] Something was starting to stir that would gradually evolve into the Christmas we know by the mid-1830s."²²³ During this maturation period of approximately twenty years, Fry was born, experienced childhood, and matured, himself.

SUBLIME IDEAS

In a letter to the music critic Richard Storrs Willis (1819–1900) following the first performance of the *Santa Claus* symphony in the city of St. Nicholas, Fry recounted his childhood Christmases. He describes sleepless nights brought on by excited anticipation, "wondering if Santa Claus had come down the chimney or not."²²⁴ Linking these childhood experiences with his composition, Fry argued for the symphony as an artifact of Americanness. The symphony incorporates several themes recognized at the time as literally or figuratively American, all of which find a place in the narrative of Christmas. Included among these themes are nature, religion, family, motherhood, childhood, love, death, and imagination—all of which Fry called "sublime ideas."²²⁵ When critics

²²² Ibid., 29.

²²³ Burstein, 87.

²²⁴ Fry, 140.

condemned the symphony for not being an “earnest work of Art,” Fry’s rebuttal highlighted these concepts. He argued that they represent the human, if not specifically Christian American, condition.

The gravest truths are laughed at when first presented – and I should not be surprised, therefore, that Santa Claus, though touching the deepest chord of the popular heart in religion, in festivity, in love, —in a mother’s love—in childish ecstasies which alas , in after life never return—in the mysteries of birth and the terrors of death, God singing the dirge in the winter’s wind—in the Messiah Hymn of a Christmas morn, should not be considered “an earnest work of Art.”²²⁶

Grave truths were Fry’s concern, and he found them in the relationships between mother and child, home and family, imagination and play. In the trope of Santa Claus, sublime thought was Americanized and expressed what the poet William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878) called “new modes of sublimity, of beauty, and of human emotion.”²²⁷ Here is the American sublime extending beyond Heinrich’s wildness, as a democratic voice representing deep feelings about commonplace ideas. The symbol of Santa Claus linked hopeful self-empowerment with a child-like national identity as the embodiment of the American experience.

The presence of Fry’s youthful experiences with Santa Claus in his 1853 symphony point toward a national trend not only in the development of Christmas but also in the nineteenth-century American concept of childhood. Fry was ten years old

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid. Here the similarity to Wordsworth’s *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* is worth noting. “What though the radiance which was once so bright, Be now for ever taken from my sight, Though nothing can bring back the hour Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower; We will grieve not, rather find Strength in what remains behind. . .”

²²⁷ William Cullen Bryant, “Lecture Fourth on Imitation and Originality,” in *Prose Writings of William Cullen Bryant*, ed. Parke Godwin (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1889), 40.

when “An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas” appeared in the *Troy Sentinel* on 23 December 1823.²²⁸ The poem’s enthusiastic reception in New York and Pennsylvania, as well as early reprints, suggest that Fry knew the poem and possibly used it as inspiration for his *Santa Claus*. Although the poem describes a visit by Saint Nicholas, the saint’s former guise of “austere, godly, rod-wielding bishop” is missing.²²⁹ Gone are the masked Pelznickle (or Belsnickle) and Aschen Claus with their chains and whips with which to threaten and punish naughty children.²³⁰ What remains is the figure Fry portrays in his symphony.

He was dress’d all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnish’d with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys was flung on his back,
And he look’d like a peddler just opening his pack:
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples how merry;
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow.
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook when he laugh’d, like a bowl full of jelly:
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laugh’d when I saw him, in spite of myself.
 (“An Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas,” *Troy Sentinel*, 23 December 1823)

This new Santa brings joy, love, and hope. As Bowler observes, “ In the morning, there will be no crying of disappointed children who have woken from dreams of sugar plums

²²⁸ Commonly known as “‘Twas the night Before Christmas,” the poem was originally published anonymously but later attributed to Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863) and then to Henry Livingston Jr. (1784-1828). Although the debate of authorship is ongoing, current research tends to favor Livingston.

²²⁹ Bowler, 43.

²³⁰ Ibid. Pelznickle and Aschen Claus are considered Germanic variants to Santa Claus brought by immigrants to American colonies, particularly in the area of Baltimore and Pennsylvania Dutch country.

to learn that they have been judged and found wanting.”²³¹ Fry embraced this Americanized personification and called Santa Claus as “*our* only Fairy,” suggesting that all previous versions of the character no longer represented the American spirit.²³² Writing early in the twentieth century, Abraham Rosenbach affirmed that “children’s books reflect the minds of the generation that produced them more than any other type of literature.”²³³ Accordingly, “An Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas” illustrates a developing trend in children’s literature during the first half of the nineteenth century characterized by an increasingly tolerant attitude toward children and a growing recognition that they were not merely small adults. These changes are more pronounced among upper-class families than in the working classes. While Americans made efforts to provide an education to all young people, Gillian Avery affirms that during the 1840s and 1850s, “two distinct codes of behavior” existed for children.²³⁴ “One code was for the leisure class, the other for working class children who were not afforded time to play.”²³⁵ Only after the Civil War would literature for children become more unified in moral intent.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Emphasis added. Fry, 138.

²³³ Quoted in Norejane J. Hendrickson and Nancy Taylor Coghill, “Nineteenth Century Children’s Poetry: A Reflection of the Age,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 11, no.2 (Summer 1986): 72. Originally in Abraham Simon Wolf Rosenbach, *Early American Children’s Books* (Portland, ME: The Southworth Press, 1933).

²³⁴ Quoted in Hendrickson and Coghill, 73.

²³⁵ Hendrickson and Coghill, 73.

As attitudes toward children evolved, Willam Fry, Sr., Fry's father, helped establish the first public school district in Philadelphia in 1818 and was elected as one of the district's first Controllers or Board Members.²³⁶ To address the low quality of education in Philadelphia, the board formed the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Public Schools in 1827. This organization went on to support the common school laws of 1834 and 1835, and the Consolidation Act of 1836, through which Philadelphia's public schools joined the Common School movement and free education became available to white school-age children.²³⁷ Once achieved, the board boldly declared, "The stigma of poverty, once the only title of admission to our public schools, has [...] been erased from our statute book, and the schools of this city and county are now open to every child."²³⁸

Literature, particularly poetry, played a central role in the early curriculum of the Common School. *McGuffey's Reader*, one of the most popular texts throughout the nineteenth century and even into the twentieth century, included short stories and poetry intended to teach not only principles of diction and grammar, but also morality and

²³⁶ Upton, 6.

²³⁷ Although free, Philadelphia public schools were not integrated at first. In 1822 the first public primary school for African American boys opened on May Street. Four years later another school for girls opened on Gaskill Street. William W. Cutler, "Public Education: The School District of Philadelphia," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/public-educationthe-school-district-of-philadelphia/>.

²³⁸ Quoted in Cutler. The Common School movement lead by Horace Mann (1796-1859) grew from the belief that "political stability" and "social harmony" began with education.²³⁸ Mann believed, "Without undervaluing any other human agency, it may be safely affirmed that the Common School [...] may become the most effective and benignant of all forces of civilization." Horace Mann, "Twelfth Annual Report to the Massachusetts Board of Education 1848," *Foundations of Education in America*, ed. James Noll and Sam Kelly (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1970), 210.

character. *McGuffey* introduced children to characters like Lazy Ned, a young lad who never learned the value of work.

“’Tis royal fun,” cried lazy Ned,
“To coast upon my fine, new sled,
 And beat the other boys;
But then, I can not bear to climb
The tiresome hill, for every time,
 It more and more annoys.”

So, while his school-mates glided by,
And gladly tugged up hill, to try
 Another merry race,
Too indolent to share their plays,
Ned was compelled to stand and gaze,
 While shivering in his place.

Thus he would never take the pains
To seek the prize that labor gains,
 Until the time had passed;
For, all his life, he dreaded still
The silly bugbear of *up hill*,
 And died a dunce at last.

(“Lazy Ned,” *McGuffey’s New Fourth Eclectic Reader: Instructive Lessons for the Young*, Cincinnati, OH: Wilson, Hinkle & Co., 1866, 33–34.)

However, as inescapable as the driving forces of indoctrination and behavioral conditioning were in literature like “Lazy Ned,” an increasing number of authors recognized the changing attitudes toward childhood. In response, they began writing poems and books for sheer enjoyment, capitalizing on the social valorization of imagination and play.

EDUCATING THE AMERICAN CHILD

As a child of the leisure class in America, the young Fry spent his early years in relative comfort. His education culminated at Mount St. Mary’s (1826–30), a Roman

Catholic boarding school and leader in classical education in Emmitsburg, Maryland (now Mount St. Mary's University). Students were encouraged to engage in various "amusements," including shooting, fishing, skating, and swimming.²³⁹ These leisure activities illustrate the partnership between education and play during the early nineteenth century for children of Fry's class. It was during these moments of teenage-freedom that Fry likely became acquainted with the writings of Irving, whom he regarded as a member of the "aristocracy of talent," and possibly other American authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64).

In 1852, the same year Fry returned from Paris, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys* disrupted the genre of children's literature in the United States forever. It is a collection of stories told within the framework of another story. Eustace Bright, Hawthorne's fictitious, eighteen-year-old Yankee storyteller, recounts ancient Greek myths to a sprightly group of twelve children, or "little folk" amid the autumnal foliage of the Housatonic River Valley. The children, with names like Primrose, Periwinkle, Cowslip, and Squash-Blossom, are around six years of age. They fawn lovingly over the "grandfather" figure of Eustace.²⁴⁰

Much as Fry was censured for a perceived lack of "earnest" intentions or sincerity, Hawthorne was criticized for his lighthearted treatment of lofty, classical themes such as Perseus and Medusa, Midas, Pandora, and Hercules. In one instance,

²³⁹ Upton, 12.

²⁴⁰ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1883), 3.

Eustace completes the retelling of Perseus and Medusa, just as King Polydectes looks upon the gorgon's severed head and turns to marble. Eustace asks the children, "Was not that a very fine story?" inciting several excited replies from the children.

"Oh yes, yes!" cried Cowslip, clapping her hands. "And those funny old women, with only one eye amongst them! I never heard of anything so strange."
"As to their one tooth, which they shifted about," observed Primrose, "there was nothing so very wonderful in that. I suppose it was a false tooth. But think of your turning Mercury into Quicksilver, and talking about his sister. You are too ridiculous!"²⁴¹

Eustace (Hawthorne) offers no moral to this story; there is no lesson to be learned. The sole intent was to entertain, not to teach, and with this freedom, the children focus their attention on the absurd and the fanciful. The lofty mythology that inspired centuries of artists, poets, and composers becomes a child's plaything. Hawthorne had anticipated the criticism of his adult naysayers, whereas Fry seemed shocked at the flippant treatment of his symphony. Hawthorne frequently reminds his audience throughout the *Wonder Book* that "he is not going to treat the myths with a scholarly seriousness."²⁴² Eustace, as Hawthorne's mouthpiece, introduces the subject of these tales to his listeners (readers):

"It would be a great pity," said he, "if a man of my learning (to say nothing of original fancy) could not find a new story every day, year in and year out, for children such as you. I will tell you one of the nursery tales that were made for the amusement of our great old grandmother, the Earth, when she was a child in frock and pinafore. There are a hundred such; and it is a wonder to me that they have not long ago been put into picture-books for little girls and boys. But, instead of that, old gray-bearded grandsires pore over them in musty volumes of Greek, and puzzle themselves with trying to find out when, and how, and for what they were made."²⁴³

²⁴¹ Ibid., 54.

²⁴² Ellen Butler Donovan, "'Very Capital Reading for Children': Reading as Play in Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys*," *Children's Literature* 30 (2002): 22.

²⁴³ Hawthorne, 5-6.

This unapologetic transfer of the Greek myths from “musty volumes” studied by adults, to their original form as “nursery tales,” mirrors the displacement of Santa Claus from his lofty sainthood. Ellen Butler Donovan asserts that Hawthorne’s stories emphasize “sentiment and heart over the coldness of intellect associated with classicism.”²⁴⁴ Fry’s committed advocacy for a new American school of music rejects the same classicism associated with the symphony and centers on music more closely related to the children’s stories contained in Hawthorne’s *Wonder Book*.

While Fry had no children of his own, he was known as “a charming playmate of children” and apparently enjoyed a close relationship with his nieces and nephews.²⁴⁵ Family ties were a central part of Fry’s life, as illustrated by his early relationships with his parents and siblings. At one point, Fry even collaborated with his brothers Joseph, Edward, and Horace on several works, the most significant of which is the opera *Leonora* (1845). Fry possibly had these relationships in mind when composing *Santa Claus*. For example, he mentions that the symphony is about “the family joys of a Christmas party” and “the gentle festivities and affections of the family circle on *the* day of the year.”²⁴⁶ Resonances of Fry’s personal experience as a child might even suggest that the symphony is a semi-autobiographical work, as well as an artifact of domestic American life at mid-century.

²⁴⁴ Donovan, 22.

²⁴⁵ Quoted in Upton, 173.

²⁴⁶ Fry, 138 and 140. Emphasis is original.

THE COMIC

Fry's meticulous attention to detail and symbolism, particularly in the scenes representing family interactions, shows his obsession with the authentic portrayal of human nature. Using Shakespeare as his model, Fry strove to achieve a balance between "mirth and wit [...] passion and grief," an enterprise he believed was necessary to "serious Art" as a reflection of human nature.²⁴⁷ Distancing himself again from his European counterparts, Fry defended his use of humor in *Santa Claus* while unabashedly criticizing the perceived lack of humanity in the works of composers like Mozart and Beethoven.

It is for the want of this whole genius, that Europe has given us no Shakespeare in music, both Beethoven and Mozart being but half made up—Beethoven being incapable of gaiety and Mozart destitute of comedy—and neither of them having uttered a witticism in speech or music in the whole course of his life.²⁴⁸

Widely acknowledged as remarkable contributions to comedic genres such as *singspiel* and *dramma giocoso*, Mozart's comic operas struck Fry as "gentle and passive." Perhaps defensively, the American sharply criticized one of Mozart's most iconic comedic characters as being explicitly humorless:

It may be safely stated, that a comic character should show his comedy, above all, in his solo, and the comedy of Leporello's in *Don Giovanni*, I, for one, cannot discover.²⁴⁹

And Beethoven?

²⁴⁷ Fry, 138.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

As to Beethoven's comedy, I shall not treat on that, as the claim is never set up that he possessed it: but I have heard him called the Shakespeare of music a hundred times: to which I reply, also, "Fudge!"²⁵⁰

Such disdain for the comedic shortcomings of Mozart and Beethoven is overstated.

However, Fry's distancing of literature and music from the classicism of Old-World traditions to make room for imaginative American play rests at the heart of *Santa*

Claus.²⁵¹

CHILDHOOD AND FRY'S *SANTA CLAUS*

Fry's *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony* is scored a large symphony orchestra with Jullien's musicians specifically in mind, including a part of saxophone. There are no individual movements, however throughout the approximately thirty-minute work Fry creates a series of four scenes or tableaux that illustrate the progression of a program (see Appendix B). The subject of childhood is first introduced in celestial terms in the slow, first tableau, marked by trumpeting fanfares, announces the birth of the Christ child (see Figure 3.2). Fry then

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ While it is unknown if children were in the audience that Christmas eve in 1853 when Santa Claus made his appearance at Metropolitan Hall, Jeanne Klein suggests that young people were regular attendees at public entertainments throughout the nineteenth century and before. During the 1850s, approximately half the population of the state of New York was under the age of twenty. Jeanne Klein, "An Epoch of Child Spectators in Early US Theater," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 22.



Figure 3.2. William Henry Fry, *Santa Claus*, mm. 30-46.

descends to the terrestrial realms and the events of a contemporary family’s Christmas Eve party in the second tableau. Here Fry scores the scene in “triple counterpoint, to represent the children, the youths and the old people,” each with their own themes but musically joined into one whole, symbolically representing the “family circle.”²⁵² The festivities resume the next day in a scene that “draws children as they ought to be—poetically—toys in hand on Christmas morn.”²⁵³ Jullien’s orchestra used toy instruments to augment the soundscape of children opening their presents in a “childish fanfaronade,” while the rest of the orchestra musically recited “infantile poetry in *Bo-peep*.”²⁵⁴ These scenes highlight the act of play and situate it as not only essential to the children but also the rest of the family. Through remembered sound, the musical actions of the family in Fry’s symphony would have been familiar to the audience, thus inviting

²⁵² Fry, 140.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 138.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

the listener to play alongside the children.²⁵⁵ Donovan notes that the romanticized nineteenth-century view of childhood in America included a perception that children were “beings who resided in a golden age” and were “unencumbered with the quotidian reality of adult life.”²⁵⁶ Also standard at the time, despite generations of indigenous history and tradition, was the trope of America’s infancy, or as Fry called it “national childhood.”²⁵⁷

The musical allusion to nursery rhymes and the inclusion of toy instruments create a symphonic soundscape of intimacy and American domesticity, which merges music and play within the context of the sublime. Roger Moseley’s thoughts are pertinent here. “Musical play and playful music take shape in the spaces that open up between sign and sound, instruction and execution, the probable and the implausible, the permissible and the imaginable.”²⁵⁸ But even as Fry toyed with the nineteenth-century perception of the symphony, critics like Willis and Dwight disparaged his efforts, leading him to defend the intentionality of his compositional choices and the departure from traditional symphonic expectations.²⁵⁹ Fry saw the “imperative to generate an individual

²⁵⁵ Donovan, 23-24.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 26.

²⁵⁷ Fry, 140.

²⁵⁸ Roger Moseley, *Keys to Play: Music as a Ludic Medium from Apollo to Nintendo* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 16.

²⁵⁹ For a detailed account of the reception history of Fry’s *Santa Claus*, see Douglas W. Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Douglas W. Shadle, “How Santa Claus Became a Slave Driver: The Work of Print Culture in a Nineteenth-Century Musical Controversy,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 8, no. 4 (2014).

compositional identity,” as paramount, however.²⁶⁰ In this respect, Fry recalls Heinrich’s “wildness” but with some of the sharp edges rounded off. Moseley asserts, “Those who play (with) music can transgress and subvert as well as obey the protocols that constitute the unwritten rules of engagement, and such play can on occasion transform the rules themselves.”²⁶¹ While Fry cannot be credited with transforming the rules of composition, by playfully manipulating the symphony, he “realized the tactical potential to mock, shock, and critique” and created a relatable, yet transformative and wild experience for his audience.²⁶²

THE GOTHIC

Juxtaposed with the musical scenes of the Christmas Eve party, is a dark reminder of nature’s unpredictable wildness and power. In the third tableau, Fry depicts a “perishing traveler” who succumbs to the cold and bitterness of a winter storm. The composer describes this frightening evocation of deadly winter storms, scored for solo double bass and tremolo strings, as sublime (see Figure 3.3). In fact, Fry describes the winter wind as “the sublimest music in the world,” and marvels at its supernatural characteristics:

²⁶⁰ Shadle, 9.

²⁶¹ Moseley, 19.

²⁶² Ibid.



Figure 3.3. William Henry Fry, *Santa Claus*, “Perishing Traveler,” Largo grave, mm. 60-69 (double bass solo).

These winter winds have sobbed and mourned through ether in their wild grief for thousands of years, forever circumambient the poles, and riding the storm as it careers from the arctic each circle of the seasons. They are the type of grief which is always eloquent and generally sublime. God speaks of the passing world in them: they are the audible epitaph of mortality—cold, deathlike.²⁶³

Fry’s anthropomorphic wind sobs and moans. The sound is both worldly and divine, deathlike yet immortal, sublime, and beautiful. The winds “come from God’s hand,” Fry asserts, in layers of “harmonious beauty,” each with a “distinct melodious meaning.”²⁶⁴ To represent the symbolic stratum of the wind, Fry uses the interval of a minor third throughout this gripping scene. Fry removes himself from the compositional process and suggests metaphysical authorship.

[The minor thirds] heave along in harmonious masses the plain of sound, until suddenly at some signal from the Eternal, they rush up altogether furiously through several octaves to the highest point of despair [...] and having so “cried with a loud voice,” rush down the scale to their cold cradle below, where they rock and rock, or sing themselves to sleep.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Fry, 140.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

Philosophers have labeled this variant of sublimity that as Gothic. The Gothic sublime destabilizes the Self in much the same way as terror; each results in the disruption of pre-existing relationships with the Other. Both Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant addressed the relationship between the experience of sublime and vicarious terror; however, the Gothic differs from their summations to exclude any sense of acceptance of the Other. Fry's countryman, Edgar Allen Poe (1809–49), capitalized on this overwhelming sense of imbalance and terror rampant in works like “The Telltale Heart” (1843). Downes affirms that the Gothic “subverts binary oppositions,” which occur between Self and Other.²⁶⁶ He explains,

[The Gothic] destabilizes cultural and supposedly “natural” boundaries and intensifies anxiety concerning the sustained coherence and even survival of the modern subject through heightening fear of the Other. It presents disturbing embodiments of unspeakable horrors; it imperils the mastery of dominant elements culturally established in such binary oppositions.²⁶⁷

The winter wind always returns in an eternal cyclic pattern bound to the changing seasons. Each year it brings with it the reality of human existence, that death eventually reaches all people. In Downes's words, “The Gothic points with a quivering finger to that which lies beyond the limits of Enlightenment knowledge, to dark corners unilluminated by the light of reason or the glow of angels.”²⁶⁸ Fry explores these corners through musical effects that suggest “the moaning human voice,” and a “climax of despair shrieking in the pitch of masculine humanity.”²⁶⁹ Before the resolution of the phrase, an

²⁶⁶ Downes, 97.

²⁶⁷ Downes, 97.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Fry, 140.

interrupting chord by the brass announces the traveler's demise. By layering the winter wind with the shrieks of the perishing traveler, they merge, a message to both old and young that death comes to all, a dark image for a symphony that is supposed to be about Santa Claus.

Following the morbid foray, Fry returns his listeners to the sentimental safety of the family home with the arrival of Santa Claus in the fourth tableau. Fry portrays this moment musically with a bassoon solo punctuated with sleigh bells and whip cracks (see Figure 3.4). After he leaves, the family awakes on Christmas morning to the strains of the Christmas hymn, “Adeste fideles.”



Figure 3.4. William Henry Fry, *Santa Claus*, Allegro non tanto, mm. 3-10 (bassoon solo).

In this fourth and final scene, Fry’s musical interplay with the comic, the Gothic, and the sentimental push the boundaries of traditional aesthetic concepts. The poet and literary critic David Baker argues that throughout the nineteenth century, “the high tone and terror of the European sublime is maintained in America,” however, “significant national adjustments” defined the distinct American sublime.²⁷⁰ Baker uses the more static example of the European elegy as a genre of poetry that “rarely finds impulsion,

²⁷⁰ David Baker, “The Sublime: Origins and Definitions,” *The Georgia Review* 58, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 308.

remaining stricken, in awe or in stasis.”²⁷¹ If Fry had ended the symphony with the death of the traveler, *Santa Claus* would be nothing more than an elegiac acceptance of things as they are. Listeners would come away pondering the inescapable fate of the traveler. Instead, Fry “pushes off” from the tragedy and continues the journey.²⁷² This thrust forward, embodying hope, is a defining quality of the sublime in America. “Here is the Romantic sublime,” declares Baker, “but without the guilt, the dread, the sin, or shame.”²⁷³ Fry’s energetic children infuse the symphony with momentum, innocence, and optimism. The return of frivolity mocks the Gothic events of the night, as children with their toys figuratively dance on the grave of the traveler as if it had all been a dream.

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

The hopeful gesture that reaches beyond death to life, as portrayed by the dying traveler and the children in Fry’s *Santa Claus*, is often interpreted as an allegory on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Recent scholarship perpetuates this connection, citing Fry’s 1,300-word printed synopsis that accompanied the first performance (see Appendix 2.1).²⁷⁴ Shadle suggests that the music clearly “illustrates death and life, sin and redemption,” and refers to Santa Claus as “a symbol for Christ.”²⁷⁵ However, the

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid., 309.

²⁷³ Ibid., 308.

²⁷⁴ Shadle, 91.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

religious themes included in the symphony do not begin or end with Christ. Although Santa Claus can never be entirely “stripped of religious meaning,” Gerand Bowler notes that nineteenth-century Americans preferred a “more secular” Santa Claus.²⁷⁶ “Most churchfolk,” states Bowler, “felt that Santa Claus was a role model who could inspire generosity and compassion in children.”²⁷⁷ As one of the “churchfolk” himself, Fry’s portrayal of Santa Claus aligns with this latter summation. What Fry achieves throughout the symphony is a blending of the sacred and secular, rooted in the American sublime, Christian nationalism and commercialism. Several points support this observation. Fry begins the work with a trumpet solo (see figure 3.5), which he designates as “the celestial precursor to the announcement of the glad tidings of the Saviour’s coming birth.”²⁷⁸ This announcement is soon followed by a more subdued passage played by the

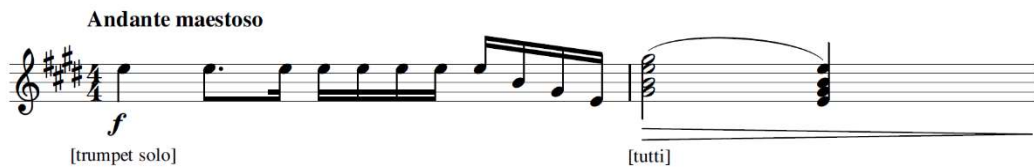


Figure 3.5. William Henry Fry, *Santa Claus*, Andante maestoso, mm. 1-2 (opening fanfare).

²⁷⁶ Bowler, 86.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 93.

²⁷⁸ Quoted in Upton, 335.

horns, suggesting “the Messiah’s advent is to be one of love.”²⁷⁹ Subsequent passages in the “first movement” recall “religious harmony” and the “rage of fallen angels.”²⁸⁰ Still, before the well-prepared image of Christ can appear and fulfill the prophecy of his birth, Fry diverts attention to the opening Christmas Eve party and remains in terrestrial realms until the last note of the symphony. Following the portrayal of the perishing traveler, Fry briefly reminds the listener of Christ’s birth.

As the voice of the traveler ceases in cold death, the church bell tolls midnight, while a trembling discord is played on the Violins, harmonically unresolved up to the last note of the bell. The hour being tolled, the Violins, at the final stroke of twelve, instantly mount up into their highest regions, which are among the novelties of the instrumentation of this day, being an addition to the upper portion of the orchestral Violin unused by composers a few years since.²⁸¹

Fry refers to this “discourse” as “the recollections of a new birth in the thin treble of infancy.” Yet again, before the Christ child can come into focus, he disrupts the expected flow with “a fresh intonation.”²⁸² At the moment the listener is led to remember the birth of Christ, Fry inserts a bassoon solo meant to represent Santa Claus.²⁸³ Fry calls the bassoon “the most quaint of all in the orchestra” and pairs the instrument with a melody “in double-time like the trot of a horse” while accompanying it with sleigh bells and whip cracks.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Upton, 336.

²⁸¹ Quoted in Upton, 337.

²⁸² Quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁸³ Fry, 140. Fry describes this moment in the symphony as “equal in musical value to the best fugue ever written.”

²⁸⁴ Quoted in Upton, 337.

The trotting and bells grow louder, and suddenly Santa Claus reins up his steed with a jerk, imitated by a rasping sound on the stringed instruments. Santa Claus then flies down the chimney to the soft notes of the flutes; the Lullaby is again heard hinting at the children, while harp-like notes on the Violins show the click of the toys as they are thrown in the stockings of the happy little sleepers. Santa Claus then retakes his sleigh as the flutes mount up, and the retreating music of pattering hoofs and tinkling bells dies away.²⁸⁵

Fry's jaunty, equine melody, and the scene it accompanies, recalls the jolly, pipe-smoking sprite in "An Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas," not the Biblical Messiah. Near the completion of the symphony, Fry includes the Christmas hymn *Adeste fideles* "heard in the highest regions of the Violins with the fluttering ecstasy of hovering angels."²⁸⁶ The allusion to the nativity is again brief, as the children awake and begin to play with their toys, blissfully unaware of the events of the previous night and the scene of death that lays just outside the front door. *Adeste Fideles*, a call to the earth-bound faithful, returns, and Fry concludes the symphony in grand style with the full forces of the orchestra.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Quoted in Upton, 337–38.

²⁸⁶ Quoted in Upton, 338.

²⁸⁷ The juxtaposition of sacred and secular themes was a national trope at the time of the symphony's creation. During the 1830s and 1840s, John L. O'Sullivan (1813-1895), editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, touted a particular form of Christian nationalism that fueled the perpetuation of the American sublime as an element of American exceptionalism. (It is generally accepted that O'Sullivan famously coined the term "Manifest Destiny" in 1845 while defending the right of the United States to annex the Republic of Texas. In *Mistress of Manifest Destiny* (2001), Linda S. Hudson argues that it was the journalist Jane Cazneau who first used the term. Hudson bases her claim on computer-aided textual analysis of Cazneau's writings and that many editorials in O'Sullivan's publications are unsigned.) Consequently, O'Sullivan led a group of writers called the "Young America" that boldly "promoted the development of a uniquely American literature defined by its democratic spirit." Members of the group included Herman Melville (1819-1891) and Nathaniel Hawthorne discussed earlier. John Wilsey, a religious scholar, argues that O'Sullivan "took the figure of Christ and Christ's messages and marshaled them in the service of American ideals." Detailing this process, Wilsey states that O'Sullivan "replaced Christ with democracy as the savior of the human race [...] Neither Christ nor the gospel, but democratic liberty ushered in a world order 'destined to cease only when every man in the world should be finally and triumphantly redeemed.'" Here Wilsey quotes from O'Sullivan's 1839 editorial in which he expresses his belief in the God-given exceptionalism of the United States. Shadle recognizes distinct

CONCLUSION

In the environment of antebellum America, Fry's *Santa Claus* is not so much a symphony of "religious harmony" or "life and death, sin and redemption," it is one of political harmony, democracy and freedom, and Manifest Destiny with the leisure-class American family at its core. Fry's allusions to the nativity become allusions to the founding of the nation. The howling winds that bring death to the traveler become the voice of God condemning the Old World. The perishing traveler is the death of the Old World. The children playing with their toys brought by Santa Claus are the American people enjoying the gift of freedom brought by democracy. Finally, the closing Christmas carol calls to those seeking political salvation: O come, all ye faithful. These sublime ideas address concepts of nationalism, self-empowerment, and American hope—each one fundamental characteristics of the American sublime.

Through the Americanization of the sublime, the sensibilities of European culture are challenged and altered. As aesthetics changed throughout the nineteenth century to reflect changing tastes among American citizens, artists, poets, and composers looked for new ways to relate their subjects to the people of the United States. It is possible Fry used the Americanized version of Santa Claus and the symbol of the American family as

parallelisms in the writings of O'Sullivan and Fry. Christian nationalism perpetuated the idea of Christianity as the "pinnacle of civilization." With this belief, writers like O'Sullivan and composers like Fry could equate American democracy with Christian doctrine. Thus, American Christianity was used to leverage the United States above the nations of Europe, specifically Germany and England, where cultural tensions were strongest. America was not just a Christian nation; it was *the* Christian nation because, as Wilsey states, "it [America] was the divine choice of God for the political salvation for the world." If Jesus Christ is Santa Claus, he must also be an American. See John D. Wilsey, "'Our Country Is Destined to be the Great Nation of Futurity': John L. O'Sullivan's Manifest Destiny and Christian Nationalism, 1837-1846," *Religions* 8, no. 68 (April 2017): 6.; Shadle, 65.; John L. O'Sullivan. "The Course of Civilization." *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 6 (1839): 213.

equally characteristic of the American experience. Foreshadowing Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) work by nearly three-quarters of a century, Fry used humor to connect the human experience to an act of play. In Freud's summation, humor renders life as “nothing but a game for children.”²⁸⁸ If existence is a game to be played, are not the best game players the young whose imaginations are still wild, untamed by the passage of time? With figures like Santa Claus to buoy their place in society and publications like the *Wonder Book* to legitimize play (their greatest skill), children take a central role in Fry's symphony. Is *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony*, a work for children? Yes, to the extent that children represent every citizen of the United States in imagination (originality), playfulness (wildness), and youthfulness (politics).

²⁸⁸ Quoted in Downes, 96. Originally in Sigmund Freud, “Humor,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21 (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 159-166.

CHAPTER 4

CONFRONTING THE ABYSS: GEORGE FREDERICK BRISTOW'S QUOTATIONLESS AUTONOMY

I celebrate myself, and sing myself.

—Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself,”

Leaves of Grass, 1855

Born into a world defined by nationalism and a “German music problem,” George Frederick Bristow (1825–93) stood on the edge of an ever-widening cultural void between old and new worlds.²⁸⁹ While more moderate than his fellow composers Heinrich and Fry, Bristow nonetheless fought to free himself from the tradition and expectations of his Eurocentric critics. Along with literary contemporaries such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), Walt Whitman (1819–92) and Emily Dickinson (1830–86), Bristow sought artistic autonomy through the curation of an original American voice, one that echoed within the “dumb blankness” shaped by a public crying innovation and imitation in the same breath.²⁹⁰

As a violinist in the Philharmonic Society of New York from 1843 to 1882, Bristow witnessed a bias against American composers in favor of Germans. He empathized with other American composers in the discouraging task of securing

²⁸⁹ Douglas W. Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10.

²⁹⁰ Quoted in Mary Arensberg, *The American Sublime* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 9. Originally quoted from Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1968).

performances of their music, a situation Douglas Shadle confirms had “permanent ramifications for American composers.”²⁹¹ An infuriated Bristow wrote in the *Musical World & Times*, “I will neither see my country nor myself continually kept in the background, by those who should cherish its best efforts in Art.”²⁹² American artists like Bristow strove to establish a balance between European traditions and originality that would appease critics and audiences, even as they established new territory in the development of a national repertoire of symphonic music. Bristow’s compositional output supports his views on national identity formation and his efforts to construct a distinctly American voice that embodies the American sublime.

True to the circumstances of his time, Bristow repeatedly turned to places, people, literature, and events celebrated by American culture. However, his first three non-programmatic symphonies (1854, 1853, 1858) were more self-reflective and their references to the American experience, more subtle. Perhaps the most significant of these is the second symphony in D minor. The work began as a commission by the French conductor and composer Louis-Antoine Jullien (1812–1860) and was completed during the fall of 1853. Just as Jullien recognized Fry as an American composer, this conductor engaged Bristow for a work to showcase at his “Grand American Night” at the Metropolitan Hall in New York on 29 December 1853. Just five days after Jullien

²⁹¹ Shadle, 10. Several conductors in the United States during Bristow’s lifetime were of European by birth. Their programming was often seen as biased by American composers who saw their music passed over in favor of European, predominantly German, music. See also Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850-1920* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²⁹² George Frederick Bristow, “Second Letter,” *Musical World & Times* (New York, NY), 1 April 1854, 153.

introduced his audience to Fry's *Santa Claus*, the first movement of Bristow's symphony, named for the commissioner, premiered.²⁹³ Jullien continued to perform individual movements, specifically the second (Minuet) and third ("Andante poco Adagio") in England. After hearing Jullien's orchestra play Bristow's Adagio, James William Davison (1813–85), music critic for *The Times*, lauded the work as "melodious" and "extremely well-written."²⁹⁴ Davison concluded, "To judge from this one movement the entire symphony well deserves a hearing."²⁹⁵ It is unknown if Jullien ever performed the complete symphony; newspaper accounts suggest that the Philharmonic Society of New York premiered the full symphony on 1 March 1856, under the baton of Carl Bergmann (1821–76).²⁹⁶

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

During the three years between the "Grand American Night" of 1853 and the Philharmonic Society's performance of the *Jullien* Symphony, the Brooklyn-raised poet Walt Whitman met Ralph Waldo Emerson and published *Leaves of Grass* (1855). As explored in the previous chapter, that work established Whitman as a force to be

²⁹³ Also, on the program was the Minuette from Bristow's Symphony no. 1 in E-flat, Op. 10, and two works by Fry, *A Day in the Country* and the Adagio from *The Breaking Heart*.

²⁹⁴ James William Davison, "M. Jullien's Concerts," *The Times* (London), 11 December 1854.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Katherine Preston notes that although this event was most likely the first complete performance of the *Jullien* Symphony, the program from the event nor any reviews mention it. George Frederick Bristow, *Symphony no. 2 in D minor, op. 24 ("Jullien")*. Recent Researches in American Music, vol. 72. ed. Katherine K. Preston (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2011), lxxxiv.

reckoned with in American literature and prompted Emerson to call the collection of poetry “the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed.”²⁹⁷ Whitman sent a copy of *Leaves of Grass* to several writers and editors to promote the work and create an audience. Emerson was among the recipients and, in return, wrote a glowing letter of praise. Emerson declared,

I give you the joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment, which so delights us, and which larger perception only can inspire.²⁹⁸

Emerson’s celebration of Whitman’s “free and brave thought” recognizes the originality he expected from American writers. In much the same way that Fry chose to write a symphony about a transfigured Santa Claus, Whitman focused his poems on “incomparable things,” rendering the elements of the everyday as objects that evoked intense feeling and thought. Looking back on the exchange, Whitman’s biographer David Reynolds compares Emerson’s letter to Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: “Just as the Gettysburg Address soared above details of battles or political squabbles and made an eloquent generalization about the goals of the nation, so Emerson’s letter made a holistic, transcendental statement about Whitman’s poetry.”²⁹⁹ Emerson’s appraisal substantiates Rob Wilson’s claim, more than a century later, that Whitman was synonymous with the

²⁹⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Letter to Walt Whitman, July 21, 1855." *Walt Whitman: The Correspondence*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 41.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ David Reynolds, *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1995), 341-342.

American sublime.³⁰⁰ Whitman had sought Emerson's blessing, and he got it; a torch was passed.

Ten years before *Leaves of Grass* appeared, Emerson published his second series of essays in October 1844. Two essays, in particular, address the themes of originality and the plight of the American writer, and by extension, the American composer. "The Poet" expresses the need for the United States "to have its own new and unique poet to write about the new country's virtues and vices." This deficiency in new talent had sparked editorials and criticism across the arts. In November 1844, *The New York Herald* published an article whose author professed that "America does not possess one respectable 'native' talent—not the shadow of a talent, not half a shadow, not the quarter of a shadow, composing or performing."³⁰¹ The author, identified only as "U," then expresses dissatisfaction with the well-worn trope of national infancy as an excuse for the lack of American talent. "Here it will not do to say— 'We are a young country.' Young minds, luxuriating in the invigorating air of holy freedom, are best fitted to produce young, original invigorating ideas."³⁰² While U. appears to advocate a uniquely American voice based on freedom and imagination, they quickly retract that freedom by suggesting composers remain forever the student: "They [American composers] have moreover the learning, the experience of old Europe to guide them."³⁰³ Alternately, Emerson looks to

³⁰⁰ Rob Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 134.

³⁰¹ U. (otherwise unknown), "Familiar Letters on Music in America-No. 2: Is America a Musical Country at Present? And Why is it Not?," *The New York Herald* (New York, NY), 29 November 1844.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

the Old World and sees, beneath the lofty classicism forged by centuries of mythmaking, the bones of reality, and the sublimity of the mundane.

We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer; then in the middle age; then in Calvinism. Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism and Unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy, and the temple of Delphos, and are as swiftly passing away.³⁰⁴

Emerson gazes beyond the names made great by history to the environment, infrastructure, and contexts that allowed greatness to arise. The same sublime qualities attributed to the ancient city of Troy are at the heart of an ordinary newspaper. This is the same sentiment Bristow, Fry, and Heinrich hoped to convey in their music. If Beethoven, a German, could write a symphony imbued with the spirit of his nation, indeed, an American could do the same.

This emphasis on looking past the mythology to the reality that inspires it continues in Emerson's 1844 essay, "Experience." In his writing, Emerson disparages efforts to "over-intellectualize life and speaks out against experiments to create utopias," again emphasizing reality. Practically pleading with his readers, Emerson implores, "Why not realize *your* world?"³⁰⁵ He reminds his readers that "Nature, as we know her, is no Saint," and that "She comes eating and drinking and sinning."³⁰⁶ Emerson sees the

³⁰⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," *Essays: Second Series* (Boston, MA: James Munroe and Company, 1844), 41-42. The temple of Delphos as portrayed by William Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* (1623) is an allusion to the temple of Apollo in Delphi, Greece.

³⁰⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience," *Essays: Second Series* (Boston, MA: James Munroe and Company, 1844), 93. Emphasis added.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

value in accepting the world as it is for better or worse; experiences that occur throughout a lifetime are because of this wildness. Emerson encountered this recognition and acceptance of nature when he read *Leaves of Grass* eleven years later in 1855. In the same letter lauding Whitman's "free and brave thought," Emerson expressed his appreciation for the poet's realism.

I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seemed the sterile and stingy Nature, as if too much handiwork or too much lymph in the temperament were making our western wits fat and mean.³⁰⁷

Supporting Emerson's claims, Rob Wilson notes that before Whitman, American poetry was more "wishful" than "earthly fact."³⁰⁸ Whitman's nature is rough and real, reflective of an increasingly unique American voice.

Although Whitman gained Emerson's approval, the poet's perception of reality begins where Emerson's ends. By the 1830s, Emerson had started the process of democratizing and vernacularizing the sublime, in a sense making it humbler. However, as Wilson points out, Emerson's view remained fixed on grandeur, whereas Whitman refused to portray the sublime exclusively in terms of immensity because "Grass was for Whitman as miraculous as a mountain, waterfalls, or stars."³⁰⁹ This sense of reality is apparent in the following passage from *Leaves of Grass*, later forming Section 31 of

³⁰⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Letter to Walt Whitman, July 21, 1855," *Walt Whitman: The Correspondence*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 41.

³⁰⁸ Rob Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 135.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

“Song of Myself.” Here, Whitman upholds as sublime not only the flora and fauna that comprise his world but also the simplest of manufactured objects and the people that create them.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journeywork of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and the grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d’oeuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
And the cow crunching with depressed head surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is a miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels,
And I could come every afternoon of my life to look at the farmer’s girl boiling
her iron tea-kettle and baking shortcake.
(Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1855)

Whitman’s obsession with the minutiae of life was apparent to those who knew him personally. Richard Bucke, Whitman’s biographer, walked and talked at length with Whitman while outdoors, and recorded the poet’s thoughts and insights. Bucke summarized Whitman’s “central teaching” from these conversations.

The commonplace is the grandest of all things; that the exceptional in any line is no finer, better or more beautiful than the usual, and that what is really wanting is not that we should possess something we have not at present, but that our eyes should be opened to see and our hearts to feel what we all have.³¹⁰

In this synopsis are traces of the argument made by Bristow the year before Whitman published *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman’s writings tend to awaken readers to the realization of the world around them. Bristow attempted to do the same for his critics and concertgoers. In a letter to the New York Philharmonic Society disparaging the

³¹⁰ Richard Maurice Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (Philadelphia, PA: Innes & Sons, 1905), 185.

organization's favoritism toward German music, Bristow reminded his employer of the country's revolutionary origins.

America has made the political revolution which illuminates the world, while Germany is still beshrouded with a pall of feudal darkness. While America has been thus far able to do the chief things for the dignity of man, forsooth she must be denied the brains for original Art, and must stand like a beggar, deferentially cap in hand, when she comes to compete with the ability of any dirty German village.³¹¹

One month later, Bristow announced his resignation from the Society: "I will neither see my country nor myself continually kept in the background, by those who should cherish its best efforts in Art."³¹² Bristow was determined to foreground the music closest to the nation's citizens—music heard and created on American soil. Much like his contemporaries Emerson and Whitman, Bristow saw no reason that artifacts of American originality should be inferior to anything imported from Europe.³¹³

³¹¹ George Frederick Bristow, "The Philharmonic Society—Letter from Mr. Bristow, New York, Feb. 27th, 1854," *New-York Musical World* Vol. 8, no. 9 (3 March 1854), 100.

³¹² George Frederick Bristow, "Second Letter," *Musical World & Times* (New York, NY), 1 April 1854, 153. Bristow's protest was short-lived. He returned to the Philharmonic Society the following season.

³¹³ Despite a convincing a lack of supporting evidence, connections are often drawn between Bristow's attitudes toward German music and the Know-Nothing political party that rose to prominence in 1853. *Smithsonian Magazine* states that the Know-Nothing party, originally called the American party, "included more than 100 elected congressmen, eight governors, a controlling share of half-a-dozen state legislatures from Massachusetts to California, and thousands of local politicians. Party members supported deportation of foreign beggars and criminals; a 21-year naturalization period for immigrants; mandatory Bible reading in schools; and the elimination of all Catholics from public office." Additionally, the party believed "Women's suffrage was abhorrent and unnatural, Catholics were a threat to the stability of the nation, and German and Irish immigrants undermined the old order established by the Founding Fathers." (Lorraine Boissoneault, "How the 19th-century Know Nothing Party Reshaped American Politics," *Smithsonian Magazine* last modified January 26, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/immigrants-conspiracies-and-secret-society-launched-american-nativism-180961915/>). Events from Bristow's life suggest he was not affiliated with those extremist views. Although Bristow was raised a Protestant, he maintained several connections with Catholic churches throughout his life and his music taste as a composer, musician, and conductor illustrate an appreciation for German musical culture.

HEARING AMERICA

In the years leading up to the composition of the *Jullien* Symphony, New York City continued developing into a center of cosmopolitanism. Bristow witnessed the changing cultural atmosphere as thousands of immigrants made his own borough, Brooklyn, and the rest of the city their home. He was the first-born son of English immigrant parents William Richard and Anna (Tapp) Bristow. William and Anna traveled to the United States sometime soon after the War of 1812. The population in and around New York increased from approximately 120,000 in 1810 to 240,00 in 1830.³¹⁴ A decade later, the number of immigrants to the United States increased even more when between 1845 and 1854, 2.9 million immigrants poured into the country due to the potato famine in Ireland and revolutionary economic instability in Germany.³¹⁵ These increased numbers created tensions between cultures, further dividing an already diverse population. The nativist group known as the Know-Nothing party spoke publicly against the Catholic Irish and German immigrants, whom they perceived as threats to American identity. Ultimately, advances in printing and the expansion of railroad networks connected people and spread the cultures of these groups spread rapidly throughout the country. Prominently displayed within the growing international community was German musical culture. While some Germans immigrated for reasons already mentioned, others were invited by wealthy upper-class Americans who saw the opportunity to capitalize on

³¹⁴ Delmer Dalzell Rogers, "Nineteenth Century Music in New York City as Reflected in the Career of George Frederick Bristow" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967), 59.

³¹⁵ Boissoneault. "Know-Nothing."

the importation of Germanic musical culture. As Molly Barnes observes, “Americans across the country could now witness first-hand the cultivation of German and musical values by Germans themselves, rather than reading about them second-hand in the musical press.”³¹⁶ Seemingly, every small American town had its German music teacher. Hearing German music played by Germans became a daily occurrence for many Americans, further complicating the question of American national identity.

It was in this environment of diverse sounds and conflicting ideas that Bristow had his first experiences with music. Bristow’s father William, an accomplished musician and conductor, provided the young musician with his first lessons in piano and organ beginning at the age of five.³¹⁷ Seven years later, he started his first job as a performer with his father at the Olympic Theater as one of two first violinists. At the Olympic, Bristow played excerpts from English and French musical comedies consisting mostly of burlettas, burlesques, and other comic songs.³¹⁸ At age twenty-two, he joined the New York Philharmonic Society in its second season (1843–44) as a violinist. There, he experienced the most popular works by German composers. During the first eight seasons, Bristow performed Symphonies nos. 2 through 9 by Beethoven, Symphonies 39, 40, and 41 by Mozart, and a symphony each by Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Schubert. Other works included those by Berlioz, Chopin, Schumann, and Verdi.³¹⁹ Outside of the

³¹⁶ Molly Barnes, “‘To Besiege our Busy Life with Harmony’: On the Reception of German Music in Antebellum America,” conference paper, Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society (Boston, MA), 2 November 2019.

³¹⁷ Rogers, 67.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

Philharmonic Society, Bristow worked as a church musician playing the organ and directing choirs, as well as teaching music at several schools throughout New York City.

During these early years, Bristow encountered a multiplicity of musical styles and their various functions, each one influencing the young musician. As a professional trying to make a name for himself in a country searching for its own musical identity, the task before him must have seemed daunting.³²⁰ All around, critics, artists, and audiences called for originality and Americanness. Not surprisingly, Bristow looked to his personal experience as an American, just as Emerson and Whitman turned to the world around them. Emerson had declared, “Life is not intellectual or critical, but sturdy. Its chief good is for well-mixed people who can enjoy what they find, without question.”³²¹ Bristow gleaned from theaters, churches, and concert halls the music that he believed represented the United States. Aligning with Emerson’s admonition, the “well-mixed” Bristow absorbed his musical surroundings while writing the *Jullien* Symphony. In the theater and dance hall, he found the Americanized polka; in the church, the hymn; in the Philharmonic Society were the forms and orchestral sounds of the symphonic genre to encapsulate all of it. The European origin of all these forms did not deter Americans like Bristow from quickly adapting them to become part of their national identity. Out of these elements, Bristow fashioned a new symphony and, in doing so, confronted the void

³²⁰ Delmer Rogers refers to Bristow as a “jack-of-all-trades,” and observes “Bristow was good at whatever he did but his efforts were often spread among too many ventures. Whether he had the ability to do more in any one branch can only be guessed.” Rogers, 56.

³²¹ Emerson, “Experience,” 64-65.

in American musical culture caused by the opposition of two forces: the siren-like lure of European music and the desire to individuate from it.

I focus my comments here on Bristow's Symphony no. 2 in D minor, which is comprised of four movements (marked *Allegro appassionato*, *Allegretto*, *Adagio*, *Allegro agitato—Grandioso. L'istesso tempo*), and is nearly forty-five minutes in length. It is scored for a full symphony orchestra similar to those used by Mendelssohn, Weber, and Beethoven: pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings. The addition of two horns and a third trombone mark the only significant changes to the traditional orchestration. Although the symphony shows the influence of Beethoven's orchestral writing in the first movement through its motivic development and expansive sonata form, and the influence of Mendelssohn in the second and fourth movements, there are several characteristics of the *Jullien* Symphony that impart an overall sense of Americanness when taken in context with its place in time and Bristow's compositional techniques.³²² I focus my discussion on two significant elements: the inclusion of a polka in the second movement and the appearance of a hymn at the conclusion of the fourth movement.³²³ Bristow's implementation of these

³²² Katherine Preston details many of the Americanized elements of Bristow's symphony in a preface to the AR Edition of the score.

³²³ While Bristow is not the only composer to use the polka in a symphony (Franz Schubert's use of *Ländler* in his Symphony no. 3, second movement; also, later Anton Bruckner's Symphony no. 3; Mahler's Symphony no. 3, third movement; Henryk Górecki's Symphony no. 4) the polka in the context of the Symphony no. 2 in D Minor contains elements that suggest an Americanized version of the dance form which I discuss in more detail. See also Katherine Preston's analysis the AR edition of the score.

Americanized forms clarifies, first, what the symphony could be in the United States and second, how the American sublime could inform a non-programmatic musical work.³²⁴

THE POLKA IN AMERICA³²⁵

One year after Bristow joined the Philharmonic Society, the dance instructors Lawrence De Garmo Brooks and Mary Ann Gammon amazed New York audiences with a demonstration of a dance on 10 May 1844 at the National Theater that many had only read about in magazines and newspapers, the polka.³²⁶ Originating in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) during the early 1830s, within ten years, the polka had taken Parisian dance halls by storm, and word of the dance reached American shores. Reflecting on the phenomenon at the end of the century, J. J. Kral noted, “It [the polka] was more than success, it was a rage, a frenzy, a fury [...] Pretty soon one saw nothing but the polka, and everything was *a la polka*.”³²⁷ Slower in tempo than its current manifestations, and not to be confused with the gallop introduced at the same time, the polka of the 1840s

³²⁴ Bristow left no program for his symphony. While this is a tactic he would explore with subsequent works, the Symphony no. 2 does not immediately lend itself to any specific program. Preston suggests that Bristow may have avoided a program because he knew audiences of the Philharmonic society preferred “absolute” symphonic works. This decision sets Bristow apart from his peers (Anthony Philip Heinrich, William Henry Fry.). See Bristow, lxxxvii.

³²⁵ I would like to thank Michael Broyles of Florida State University for generously sharing his research on the polka in the United States.

³²⁶ The dance scholar Joseph Marks gives the date May 10, 1844 as the first time the polka was danced in the United States. The event took place at the National Theater in New York City. The Boston *Daily Atlas* stated on June 2, 1844 that the polka was to be danced in that city for the first time. Michael Broyles suggests Gabriele de Korponay was the most likely danced the polka first after his arrival in the United States on March 14, 1844.

³²⁷ J. J. Kral, “The History of the Polka,” *Music: A Monthly Magazine, Devoted to the Art, Science, Technique and Literature of Music* 9 (1896), 308-309.

required considerable virtuosity. This complexity was undoubtedly apparent in the demonstration given by Brooks and Gammon.

Notwithstanding its difficulty, Michael Broyles notes that “the polka not only met with great approval but with a strong desire by many, especially young ladies and consequently young gentlemen, to learn the dance [...]. Learning the polka necessitated lessons, and as a result, it began as a fashionable dance for the elite.”³²⁸ Within months of its introduction, the dance spread southward and westward, and American newspapers began bestowing citizenship on the polka. The Georgia-based *Macon Weekly* prophesied, “The ‘Polka’ is destined to be the *Fashionable*, as well as the *National* dance of the season.”³²⁹ The dance even became political when during the 1844 election, the aptly named James K. Polk (1795–1849) ran for president as the Democratic nominee. Political cartoons throughout his campaign and presidency often alluded to the polka, with one particular image titled: “The Polka—A New National Dance Adopted by the Democratic Convention.” In that image, Polk, along with other leaders of the democratic party, dance the polka while former Democratic presidents Andrew Jackson (1767–1845) and Martin Van Buren (1782–1862) play the bass and fiddle (see Figure 4.1).³³⁰

³²⁸ Michael Broyles, “Polkmania as Manifest Destiny,” conference paper, Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society (Boston, MA), 2 November 2019.

³²⁹ Quoted in Broyles. Originally printed in the *Macon Weekly*, (Macon, GA), 18 June 1844. Emphasis is original.

³³⁰ This cartoon was brought to my attention by Michael Broyles. Broyles discusses at length the national implications of the polka in his forthcoming monograph, *Revolutions in American Music: Three Decades that Changed the Country and Its Sounds* (Norton, 2021).

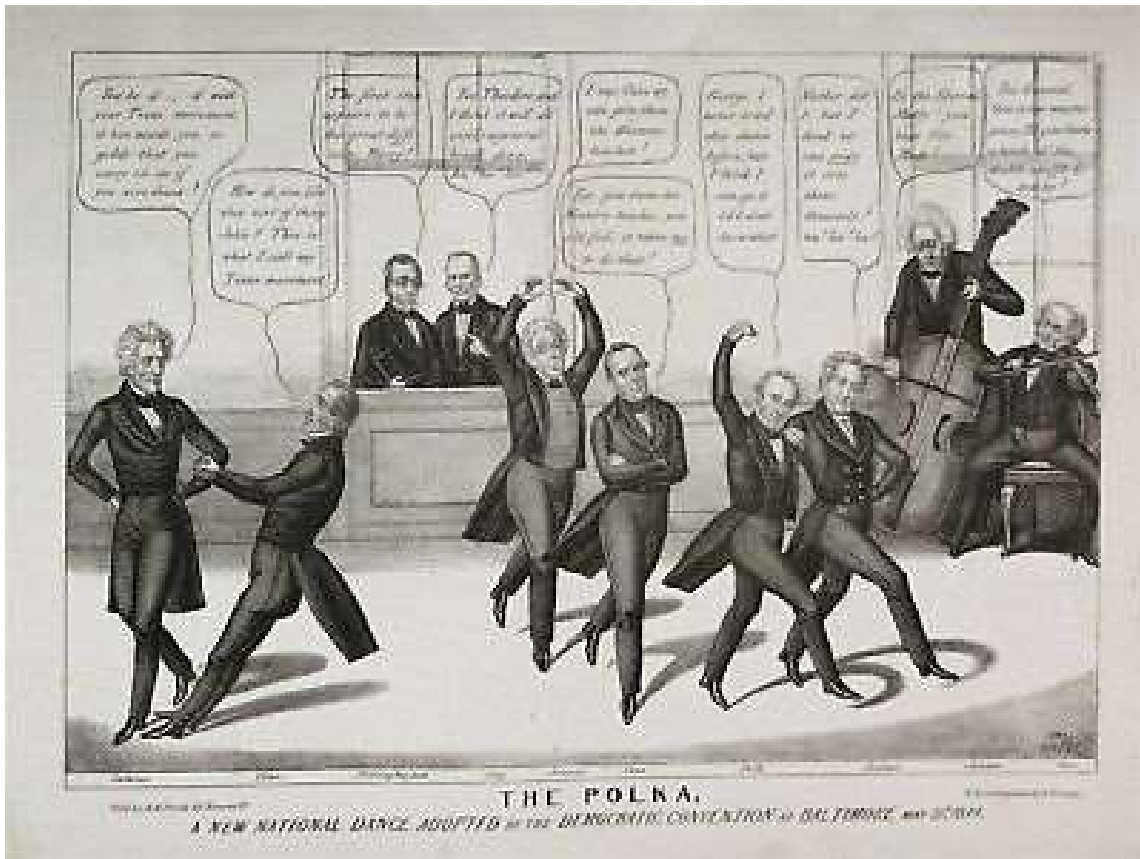


Figure 4.1. Edward C. Clay, “The Polka—A New National Dance Adopted by the Democratic Convention,” 1844.

Although the polka bloomed first among the classes that could afford lessons, it soon spread to other levels of society, as reported by *The New York Herald*.³³¹ Broyles observes that shortly after its rise in popularity, the polka was “simplified into a basic hop-step dance that anyone could learn,” and cites as evidence the efforts of an unknown dance instructor in Lowell, Massachusetts, who began teaching the polka to young girls

³³¹ *The New York Herald* (New York, NY), 2 November 1844.

working in factories as early as 1845.³³² As a young man turning twenty, it may be that Bristow was among the participants of those early dance classes in New York. Not all reporting about the polka was favorable, particularly after its expansion into the common classes. James Gordon Bennett, Sr. (1795–1872), the founder of *The New York Herald*, called the dance “disgusting and indecent.”³³³ The *Albion* declared the polka “beneath criticism.”³³⁴ The lawyer and diarist George Templeton Strong (1820–75) deemed the dance “uncivilized” and announced “[I] wish I had the man that invented the Polka. I’d scrape him to death with oyster shells.”³³⁵ Despite these criticisms, the dance flourished, eventually surpassing the waltz in popularity.³³⁶ Margaret Fuhrer declares, “The polka swept away centuries of rules about what constituted public displays of physicality.”³³⁷ Additionally, Fuhrer suggests that that polka was not merely a dance; it was a challenge to “traditional norms.”³³⁸

³³² Broyles. The most famous purveyor of the dance was the Hungarian immigrant Gabriele de Korponay (1802-1866). From his arrival in the United States on March 14, 1844, until his death, Korponay received credit for being the first to introduce the polka to the nation. However, the date of his first demonstration is unknown. Between 1844 and 1845, he traveled along the East coast, teaching the polka in Newport, Saratoga Springs, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington D. C., and Baltimore. By August of 1845, he was in St. Louis and may have spent time in New Orleans before returning to New York in November.

³³³ Quoted by the *Maine Cultivator and Hallowell Gazette* (Hallowell, ME) September 30, 1848. Bennett’s comments are a marked change from *The Herald’s* reporting only four years earlier (see footnote 38).

³³⁴ Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), v. 1, 283.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 506.

³³⁶ Margaret Fuhrer, *American Dance: The Complete Illustrated History* (Minneapolis, MN: Voyageur Press, 2014), 33.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

The rebellious—perhaps wild—nature of the Americanized polka aligned with national sentiments of identity. The *Port-Gibson Herald* in Mississippi claimed the polka had “regenerated” the American people with a patriotic spirit, comparing it to the same effect garnered by the London-born tune, “Yankee Doodle.”³³⁹ Broyles observes that while other dances waxed and waned in popularity throughout the 1800s, the polka remained a national favorite.³⁴⁰ He remarks,

In spite of its Eastern European origins and popularity in European cities, it [the polka] seemed to symbolize the new country emerging on the North American continent. It reflected “the spirit of ’76,” its fast-paced and energetic hop-skip-slide sans the social graces of Europe were emblematic of the young republic.³⁴¹

As a musician living and working in New York, Bristow would have been familiar with the repertory of theaters and dance halls in the city, including the polka. The patriotic qualities attributed to the dance must have seemed an obvious choice when he sought to layer American overtones in a new, non-programmatic work. Perhaps for these reasons, Bristow imported it into the second movement of the *Jullien* symphony.

THE *JULLIEN*: ALLEGRETTO

Traditionally, four-movement symphonies like the *Jullien* include a minuet or a scherzo as the third movement. As a violinist in the Philharmonic Society, this was the structure most familiar to Bristow. However, for his symphony, Bristow strayed from

³³⁹ “The Perils of the Polka,” *Port-Gibson Herald* (Port Gibson, MS) July 10, 1845.

³⁴⁰ Broyles.

³⁴¹ Broyles.

tradition by moving the dance to the second movement and choosing a polka instead of a minuet. The polka sits in contrast to the Beethovenian first movement's sonata form and D minor key. The second movement is comprised of a recurring scherzo section, two trios, and a coda. The first statement of the scherzo is comprised of two themes (A in D Major and B in E Major) that resemble a polka. Katherine Preston suggests the idea may have come from Felix Mendelssohn's Symphony no. 3 ("Scottish") or his Symphony no. 4 ("Italian").³⁴² Both of these symphonies rely on folk and dance forms to convey national identity. Bristow performed these works with the Philharmonic Society and would have been familiar with Mendelssohn's techniques while composing the *Jullien*. Preston suggests Bristow may have seen within Mendelssohn's symphonies the means to portray his native country musically.³⁴³ While Bristow left no indication of a specific location or event for the *Jullien* symphony, the inclusion of a polka carries the same effect as Mendelssohn's musical interpretation of Scotland and Italy.³⁴⁴ Just as Mendelssohn used national dances to imply Scottishness and Italianness, Bristow used the acculturated polka to portray its enthusiastic new home, the United States.

Recent research leaves some questions unanswered about whether the polka in the *Jullien* symphony is, in fact, not the closely related schottische.³⁴⁵ Bristow does employ

³⁴² Bristow, xcvi.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ With the "Scottish" Symphony, Katherine Preston also includes Mendelssohn's "Italian Symphony" as possible inspiration for Bristow's *Jullien* for the same reasons.

³⁴⁵ See Katherine Preston's discussion of the symphony in the preface to George Frederick Bristow, *Symphony no. 2 in D minor, op. 24 ("Jullien")*. Recent Researches in American Music, vol. 72. ed. Katherine K. Preston (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2011).

characteristic rhythms from both dances. However, these analyses did not consider the movements of the dances in relation to the music. Both the polka and the schottische are based on four-count phrases paired to make an overall structure of eight counts. While the steps for the first three counts are the same for both dances (step, close-step, step), the distinction between the dances occurs on the fourth count. In the schottische, the dancers hop squarely on the beat. In the polka, the dancers divide count four into two parts, placing the hop on the second half of the fourth beat (see Figure 4.2).

	Count 1	Count 2	Count 3	Count 4
Schottische	Step	Close-Step	Step	Hop
Polka	Step	Close-Step	Step	Hold/Hop

Figure 4.2. Order of steps for the first four counts of the schottische and the polka compared.

This subtle distinction is apparent within the first six measures of Bristow’s music. The upbeat first note of the A theme in duple meter immediately emphasizes the expected off-beat hop of the polka, which becomes a motif that persists throughout the movement. Additionally, the second beat of measure two (the fourth count of the dance) is a leap of a fourth from A4 to D5 with the higher pitch marked staccato and phrased separately from the notes before it (see Figure 4.3). The motif is repeated without variation in measure three and then is expanded to a sixth (A4 to F5) in the fourth measure. Strengthening this figuration is the dotted rhythmic pattern in measures three and four of the cello and bass. This emphasis on the upbeat suggests the Hold/Hop of the polka.

Figure 4.3. George F. Bristow, *Symphony No. 2, II Allegretto, A theme*, mm. 1–6.

While it is unknown if Bristow wrote any other polkas, he did publish a schottische for piano solo in 1850, just three years before the *Jullien*. A comparison of this work with the polka in the symphony further distinguishes between the dance forms (see Figure 4.4). The absence of an upbeat and the emphasis on the second beat of each measure indicate the dance movements of the schottische. Such evidence strongly suggests that Bristow intentionally included a polka and not a schottische as the second movement of the *Jullien* symphony.



Figure 4.4. George F. Bristow, *Tripler Schottische* (1850), mm. 1-5.

With the nation’s up-to-date polka craze imbued into the fabric of the symphony, Bristow’s *Jullien* presented nineteenth-century audiences with a familiar sound and aesthetic. Hearers of the work attuned to the sounds and movements of the polka would have recognized the populist sympathies conveyed in the *Allegretto*. While some critics like William Henry Fry received Bristow’s originality with enthusiasm, calling it the “best hit” of the symphony, others believed the inclusion of a polka sullied the symphonic genre. The German-born critic Theodore Hagen (1823–71) disparaged the movement for its departure from traditional norms.

This so-called innovation has been pronounced a very happy idea of Mr. Bristow, for the reason that “as the classical masters introduced the dance of their time, the minuet, a modern composer ought to replace the scherzo by a dance of *his* time.” But, unfortunately, the minuet in the quartets and symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, has, for the most part, only the name, minuetto, and not its form nor its character. Besides, the minuet was not the popular dance at the time of these masters; the German waltz (slow movement) and the Styrian waltz were much more generally in vogue. The minuet was patronized at court and in the aristocratic circles, and here Haydn, in his earlier life, in his capacity as general musical servant, may have had frequent opportunity to look at the dancers and to play for them. But we do not know of any of his scherzos which fully justifies their general title, minuet. Besides, this name was very soon abandoned, and that of scherzo took its place.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ Theodore Hagen, “Third Philharmonic Concert,” *Musical Review and Gazette* (New York, NY), March 8, 1856, 68-69.

Here Hagen defends his criticism by declaring that European composers did not succumb to the worldly temptation of popular fads. He suggests that had they done so, the symphonies of Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn would be filled with waltzes. Hagen insists that these men remained stalwart in their dedication to “good taste,” perpetuating the use of the “aristocratic,” stylized minuet, even if the music became so removed from the dance it purported to represent that the practitioners of the art would not recognize it.³⁴⁷

Even with its sweeping assumptions, Bristow may have received Hagen’s criticism as complimentary. In a country that purported oppression and tyranny as characteristics of the aristocratic model, despite the realities of the marginalized populations within its own borders, it is clear that a dance which was purported to embody the rhetoric of democracy would find a place in a symphony written to be America.

CONFRONTING THE ABYSS

Bristow makes an even more ambitious gesture towards national identity formation in his fourth and final movement. Here, Bristow’s evocation of the sublime enriches the extra-musical meaning of the entire work. The lens of sublimity in this movement provides a possible explanation for what has eluded critics and researchers for more than a century.

³⁴⁷ Hagen, either by ignorance or selective omission, does not recognize the times when European composers did include popular dance form in their symphonies. Consider the use of Ländler in Schubert’s Symphony no. 1, the Turkish March in Beethoven’s Symphony no. 9, or the Schottische in Mendelssohn’s Symphony no. 3 as previously discussed.

After the third movement Adagio in B-flat major, which features a prominent trombone solo, Bristow ends the symphony with a energetic fourth movement. Formally, the last movement of the symphony is a rondo that centers around an agitated A theme in D Minor. This principle theme alternates between two secondary themes, B (F Major) and C (A Major), which are both significantly more lyrical than the A theme (see Figure 4.5). Although the tempo remains the same throughout these transitions, by varying articulations and through the use of augmentation, Bristow is able to achieve a sense of contrast between each of the themes. Capitalizing on the inherent contrast of the rondo, Bristow disrupts the more pastoral B and C themes with reiterations of the A theme. The textural juxtaposition between the turbulent rondo theme and the pastoral episodes frustrates any lengthy establishment of one aesthetic. This continuous disruption creates an expectation of the Romantic sublime, the same trajectory Mark Evan Bonds finds exemplified in the late works of Beethoven. That composer's "juxtapositions of the profound and trivial, great and small, the sincere and humorous" are read by Bonds as "a pressing demand" for a "transcendent perspective."³⁴⁸ After alternating his two thematic ideas, Bristow satisfies the demand for the culminating, transcendent experience of the sublime with the symphony's coda: an American hymn.

³⁴⁸ Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 58–60. Stephen Downes, "Beautiful and Sublime" in *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Downes (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 87.

Theme A: D Minor (mm.3-14).

[Allegro agitato]

p

cresc. - - - - - [*ff*]

Theme B: F Major (mm. 42-50).

pp

Theme C: A Major (mm. 68-79).

[*p*]

sf

Figure 4.5. George F. Bristow, Symphony No. 2, IV Allegro agitato, Themes A, B, C.

At the close of the fourth movement's nearly eight-minute rondo, the instruments gradually fade away into a Grand Pause before the triumphal entry of the hymn-like coda in D major. Aurally, the Grand Pause introduces the coda, clears the air of the D minor sonority, and prepares the listener for the new triple compound meter and Grandioso, *L'istesso tempo*. Aesthetically, however, this silence plays an additional role. Kristina Knowles suggests that

[...] interrupting silences often carry with them the function of creating emphasis. By interrupting an ongoing process, these silences draw attention both to themselves and to the process that has been interrupted, increasing anticipation for what may follow.³⁴⁹

Bristow's Grand Pause, anticipated by an additional measure of rests four bars prior, draws attention to the hymn in a way that imparts more significance than previously thought by scholars who have analyzed this symphony. This aural void at a pivotal moment in the symphony could be seen as an acoustic manifestation of the American concept of the abyss.

Perhaps the most familiar nineteenth-century reference to the abyss by an American is Emerson's 1866 declaration: "There are but two, or three, or four steps, according to the genius of each, but for every seeing soul there are two absorbing facts,—I and the Abyss."³⁵⁰ In his assertion, Emerson describes the relationship between the Self and the Other, and in encountering the Other, a void forms which threatens to

³⁴⁹ Kristina Leigh Knowles, "The Boundaries of Meter and the Subjective Experience of Time in Post-Tonal, Unmetered Music" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 2016), 235. Though Knowles addresses later musical traditions, her point is valid when considering music of other eras.

³⁵⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Journals X:171 as quoted in Susan L. Field, *The Romance of Desire: Emerson's Commitment to Incompletion* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1997), 143.

overwhelm the Self. While Emerson’s description is the most-often quoted reference, the conceptual abyss appears in several works by his contemporaries. Herman Melville refers to the abyss as a “dumb blankness” in his 1851 novel *Moby Dick*.³⁵¹ For Edgar Allen Poe, the abyss appears as an ominous pit in the short story “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1842). Likewise, Bristow’s Grand Pause captures a similar aesthetic. When the expected transcendent resolution fails to materialize, the blankness leaves the listener suspended over a sonic void that threatens to derail the symphony’s forward momentum. In her poem, “A Pit—but Heaven over it” (1863), Emily Dickinson addresses the perilous experience of treading on the threshold of the abyss.

A Pit—but Heaven over it—
And Heaven beside, and Heaven abroad;
And yet a Pit—
With Heaven over it.

To stir would be to slip—
To look would be to drop—
To dream—to sap the Prop
That holds my chances up.
Ah! Pit! With Heavens over it!

The depth is all my thought—
I dare not ask my feet—
‘Twould start us where we sit
So straight you’d scarce suspect
It was a Pit—with fathoms under it
Its Circuit just the same
Seed—summer—tomb—
Whose Doom to whom
(Emily Dickinson, “A Pit—but Heaven over it—,” 1863)

³⁵¹ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1968).

Dickinson's abyss is an inescapable part of existence. From birth (seed) to middle age (summer), and to finally death (tomb), one continually dwells on the threshold of an all-consuming nothingness. While this nothingness threatens to destroy, it simultaneously acts as the genesis for originality. Like a blank canvas, the abyss is where the artist develops new forms of Self. Henry Hart affirms that by working out of the "mysterious abyss," one becomes godlike, sharing in the power to create new worlds.³⁵²

The biblical origins of the cosmos are famously rendered in Joseph Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* (1797–98). Haydn precedes the creation with a "Representation of Chaos," which utilizes the void from the scriptural text ("And the earth was without form, and void," Genesis 1:2, KJV).³⁵³ Haydn overcomes his void through the "Creation Cadence," a tonic, C-major chord, that, according to Lawrence Kramer, "shouts chaos down."³⁵⁴

Bristow's void is much more literal than the balanced, orderly one rendered by Haydn. For Bristow, there is no chaos for chaos would be something. Bristow's chaos is literal nothingness that stands in the way of the symphony's becoming a new iteration of Americanness. Rob Wilson's argument is applicable here; the abyss represents "a phantasmic blank ground, or tabula rasa, out of which a distinctly American poetic voice

³⁵² Ibid., 42.

³⁵³ While Haydn's chaos is not literal, it represents a cultivated "chaos" aligned with ideals of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. James Webster, "Haydn, (Franz) Joseph," *Grove Music Online* (2001); Accessed April 27, 2020.

³⁵⁴ Lawrence Kramer, "Recalling the Sublime: The Logic of Creation in Haydn's *Creation*," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 6, no. 1 (2009): 47.

can begin.”³⁵⁵ In this sense, “I and the Abyss” becomes Bristow and his Grand Pause. Referring to the generalized American perception of the “I and the Abyss” relationship, Harold Bloom affirms, “For ‘the Abyss,’ we can read: tradition, history, the other, while for ‘I’ we can read ‘any American.’”³⁵⁶ What is Bristow’s Other? It is the European symphonic tradition, that genre which American composers strove to make their own, but by doing so, also risked artistic destruction. By confronting and overcoming the abyss between old and new worlds, Bristow can overcome the existential crisis caused by the Other’s existence. Bristow achieved precisely this through his own “distinctly American poetic voice” in the work’s concluding hymn.

BRISTOW’S HYMN

Just as Haydn overcomes chaos with the *Creation* Cadence, Bristow transcends the abyss with a hymn that is at once familiar yet unrecognizable (see Figure 4.6). The hymn is in D Major and consists of a modified, unconventional meter (10.7.10.8.8.10.10.8), and concludes with a mini coda of five measures. Katherine Preston wrote that although it is “replete with extra-musical meaning,” the source of the tune “remains a mystery.”³⁵⁷ In Preston’s words,

Had [Bristow’s] intent been patriotic, he might have borrowed a national hymn. If he had wanted to honor Jullien, he might have chosen a hymn-like tune that had

³⁵⁵ Wilson, 11.

³⁵⁶ Harold Bloom, “Introduction: The American Sublime,” in *Emerson’s Essays* edited by Harold Bloom (New York, NY: Chelsea House, 2006), 17.

³⁵⁷ Bristow, *Symphony*, civ.

The image displays a musical score for George F. Bristow's Symphony No. 2, IV Grandioso, specifically the Hymn tune. The score is presented in four systems, each containing two staves (treble and bass clef) joined by a brace. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The systems are numbered as follows:

- System 1: Measures 1-4. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The bass line consists of a half note G3 and a half note C4.
- System 2: Measures 5-8. The melody continues with quarter notes D5, E5, and F5, followed by a half note G5. The bass line consists of a half note G3 and a half note C4.
- System 3: Measures 9-12. The melody continues with quarter notes G5, A5, and B5, followed by a half note C6. The bass line consists of a half note G3 and a half note C4.
- System 4: Measures 13-16. The melody concludes with quarter notes D6, E6, and F6, followed by a half note G6. The bass line consists of a half note G3 and a half note C4.

Figure 4.6. George F. Bristow, Symphony No. 2, IV Grandioso. L'istesso tempo. Hymn tune.

some extra-musical (perhaps regional) meaning to the French conductor, or even a melody by Jullien himself.³⁵⁸

The fact that Bristow does none of these things requires an alternative explanation.

Bristow's hymn qualifies for Wilson's "distinctly American poetic voice."

Notwithstanding the influence of composers like Mendelssohn and Beethoven, whose symphonies also make use of the hymn trope, Bristow achieves "quotationless autonomy" by avoiding pre-composed music in his symphony.³⁵⁹ As Preston observes, if Bristow had used a national song as Heinrich quoted "Yankee Doodle" in *The Columbiad*, or as Fry did "Adeste fideles" at the close of *Santa Claus*, Bristow's symphony would have a different affect. Just as Whitman advised himself during his "self-formative" years to "Make no quotations and references to any other writers," Bristow displays the same "self-trusting sublimity" in the ways he engages with the music around him.³⁶⁰ As a church musician, Bristow could have easily selected a hymn to end the symphony, he may even have had one or two as a model. However, by rejecting a quoted melody with its established associations and creating an original hymn as his conclusion, Bristow asserts "selfhood" within his music. This "selfhood" was, in turn, reinforced as national identity through subsequent performances in England; Bristow

³⁵⁸ Ibid., civ.

³⁵⁹ Wilson, 136.

³⁶⁰ As quoted in Wilson, 136. Also see Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997).

became known across the Atlantic as “THE AMERICAN COMPOSER” of his generation.³⁶¹

CONCLUSION

In his appraisal of the *Jullien* symphony, Fry recognized Bristow’s revolutionary selfhood and declared that the Philharmonic Society’s performance of the work “was the most significant and prophetic entertainment yet given.”³⁶² Furthermore, Fry believed that by performing the *Jullien*

the Society [...] was elevated from the rank of executants of European music, of Provincial performers of imported works [...] to the level of authors, of composers, of men who had faith in themselves, and were not dependent on what comes across the Atlantic.³⁶³

Nevertheless, some critics were not as enthusiastic as Fry. After the New York performance in 1854, critics highlighted the symphony’s formal characteristics and stylistic advances, rather than its American qualities. Richard Storrs Willis of the *Musical World & Times* benignly deemed it “clever” and awarded “much credit upon Mr. Bristow.”³⁶⁴ Critics also pointed out Bristow’s reliance on Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schubert, rather than the individuality so evident to Fry. His hyperbolic remarks reveal

³⁶¹ Henry Weist-Hill to Bristow, March 25 1855, Bristow Manuscript Collection, now in the Bristow Collection, NYPL. As quoted in Bristow, *Symphony*, lxxxiii.

³⁶² William Henry Fry, “Musical. The Philharmonic Society,” *New York Tribune* (New York, NY) March 3, 1856.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Richar Storrs Willis, *Musical World & Times* (New York, NY), January 7, 1854, 5. As quoted in Bristow, *Symphony*, lxix.

his intimacy with what was at stake when Bristow offered a new symphony to American audiences that fueled his excitement. Whereas critics like Willis remained content to import music to meet the cultural needs of the nation, Fry and Bristow believed such a practice relegated the United States to that of a beggar pleading for scraps.³⁶⁵ With its Americanized polka and originally conceived hymn as symbols of American identity, Bristow sought to reduce his dependence upon Europe. By wielding the Americanized sublime to confront the “feudal sublimity” of the symphonic tradition, Bristow fulfilled his goal: creating an emblem of national identity without the need for programmatic elements.³⁶⁶

Despite their similar trajectories, Bristow legitimized no such successor as Emerson did with Whitman; no torch was passed. Following his third symphony (1859), Bristow turned toward programmatic narratives and composed within the tradition of Heinrich and Fry until the end of his life. This more transparent form of the American sublime characterizes his *Arcadian* symphony (1872) and his monumental *Niagara* (1893). Although the *Jullien* fell from the nation’s collective memory, American composers Dennison Wheelock and Florence Price continued to develop the American sublime as a mode of expression to overcome the ever-present abyss of derivative composition, in addition to challenges never experienced by Heinrich, Fry, and Bristow, in their search for an American identity.

³⁶⁵ George Frederick Bristow, “The Philharmonic Society—Letter from Mr. Bristow, New York, Feb. 27th, 1854,” *New-York Musical World* Vol. 8, no. 9 (March 3, 1854), 100.

³⁶⁶ Wilson, 136.

CHAPTER 5

WHEELOCK AND PRICE: NEGOTIATING THE SUBLIME AMONG UNTRUTHS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

*Be it dark; be it bright;
Be it Pain; be it rest;
Be it wrong; be it right—
It must be for the best.*

*Some good must somewhere wait,
And sometime joy and pain
Must cease to alternate,
Or else we live in vain.*

-Alexander Posey, "Assured" (1910)

Writing in the early 1840s, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) lamented the belief that "our Negroes, and Indians [...] are yet unsung."³⁶⁷ With this remark, Emerson situates himself as a mouthpiece for the American people and echoes the accent of his generation. Among the various sublime Others like mountains, waterfalls, and sprawling prairies claimed by the United States and lauded as "'democratic vistas' of immensity" are the black and native populations living in a world that claims them as "our."³⁶⁸ As composers sought ways to overcome the philosophical disruption they believed these marginalized populations caused, many were complicit in providing a unbidden voice for them and appropriating their stylized songs. Consider Anthony Philip Heinrich's concerto grosso,

³⁶⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," *Essays: Second Series* (Boston, MA: James Munroe and Company, 1844), 41.

³⁶⁸ Rob Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 137.

The Treaty of William Penn With the Indians (1834), where the music representing the Delaware Nation bears the characteristics of the eighteenth-century European court music of Haydn or Mozart. Or, his *Manitou Mysteries* discussed in Chapter Two, where the voice of the Manitou becomes Heinrich's own. Likewise, George Frederick Bristow also invented their voice in the *Arcadian Symphonie* (1872), the *Jibbenainosay Overture* (1886), *Plantation Pleasures* (1894), and *Plantation Memories nos. 2 and 3* (1895). While each example attempts to rescue the American Self from the void rent by otherness, they are the artifacts of a predominantly white culture—mere shadows and stereotypes of the people they claim to represent.

In this chapter, I survey the lives and works of two composers in response to Emerson's authorial claims: Dennison Wheelock (1871-1927) and Florence B. Price (1887-1953). Both of these individuals were active at the beginning of the twentieth century and had successful careers as composers, educators, and musicians. Wheelock was one of many indigenous musicians at the time, but his success as a bandleader and the surviving documentation regarding his life set him apart as an ideal case study. Likewise, Price shared her lifetime with several other black composers such as Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949), William Grant Still (1895-1978), William Dawson (1899-1990), and Margaret Bonds (1913-72). However, the success of her symphonic works, her compositional methodology, and the recent surge in published research about her life contribute to the sublimity apparent in her story. Although Wheelock and Price differ in skin color, gender, culture, and religion, their experiences reflect a common thread tied to the relationship between Self and Other in early-twentieth-century America. Wheelock

and Price used the symphonic genre to negotiate untruths of American exceptionalism, citizenship, and identity. Their resulting musical artifacts illustrate how the American sublime evolved as an aesthetic framework that adopts the sublimity of Heinrich, Fry, and Bristow but alters the perspective. Instead of a first-person Self/Other relationship, the sublime experience from Wheelock's and Price's perspective is a type of third-person omniscient; the composer is both Self and Other, manifest in a diasporic double-consciousness.³⁶⁹

AMERICAN UNTRUTHS

In the first three case studies, I have addressed the American sublime as the passion of white male composers who believed they had every reason to champion their country. Their exaltations of natural wonders, folklore, and American exceptionalism wrestle with untruths developed primarily during the years between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Untruths, as forms of *dialetheia*—statements where both it and its

³⁶⁹ The pre-European contact population of Native Americans within the conterminous United States is estimated between one and ten million. By the year 1800, that number was estimated to be 600,000. Throughout the nineteenth century land secession and seizure, military subjugation, and the Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the forceful removal of thousands of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands. By the 1890s, the population of Native Americans within the United States was estimated to be at its lowest of 237,000, 0.4% of the nation's population. See J. David Hacker and Michael R. Haines, "American Indian Mortality in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Impact of Federal Assimilation Policies on the Vulnerable Population," *Annales de démographie historique* 2, no. 110 (2005): 17-29; Gregory D. Smith and Brooke N. Newman, *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014). Between 1525 and 1866, 10.7 million enslaved Africans arrived in the Americas, with approximately 388,000 shipped directly to the United States. With the abolishment of the slave trade to the United States in 1808, enslaved populations began to grow so that by 1860, there were 3.9 million enslaved and 488,000 free people of color in the country. By 1900, the number black Americans increased to 8.8 million, 11.6% of the total population of the United States. See also <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/african-american-population-history>; <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/how-many-slaves-landed-in-the-us/>; <https://www.census.gov>.

negation are true—pose a dilemma for those who negotiate them.³⁷⁰ “America is exceptional,” is one such untruth. While many reasons exist to support the claim, an equal number of arguments exist to the contrary. An untruth reaches beyond mere opinion to retain the powers of truth and determinacy in its original form and its contradiction. According to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), this duality of truth can emerge when what should be a “regulative ideal” becomes a “limit-object.”³⁷¹ In other words, the multiplicity comprising the United States becomes a single object. Thus, the subjective condition of what is “American” is championed as an objective reality. In Kantian terms, the “transcendental illusion,” supported in the United States by the rhetoric of singularity, buoyed the country’s exceptionalist narrative—whether expressed naturally, politically or industrially—throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and was believed to be the source of unique power over the nations of Europe.³⁷² In turn, certain American citizens benefitted from the power of that idea and accomplished exceptional things. However, populations living in the United States who did not easily fit the limited definition of “American” observable in most of the forefathers—i.e., white, Christian, English-speaking—found themselves confronting the same untruths, but without the promise of exceptional power.

³⁷⁰ Graham Priest, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, “Dialetheism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed May 18, 2020.

³⁷¹ Priest, et al. See also Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781; trans. and repr., New York, NY: P.F. Collier and Son, 1901).

³⁷² Kant, 275.

SUBLIMITY FOR THE SUBLIME

In their writings, both Burke and Kant described the sublime as the effect of an object on the Self (such as fear, terror, awe), and the ability of the Self to enact aesthetic judgment.³⁷³ They argue that this aesthetic disposition differs between not only sexes but also races.³⁷⁴ Kant takes his argument a step further than Burke, suggesting sexual, national, and historical characteristics also account for experiential differences of the sublime.³⁷⁵ Meg Armstrong argues that these “embodied forms of difference” equate a sense of the exotic in aesthetic discourse and that for Burke and Kant, women and blackness are sublime others.³⁷⁶ I suggest that in the time between the eighteenth-century writings of Burke and Kant and the symphonic music of the early twentieth century in the

³⁷³ Meg Armstrong, “‘The Effects of Blackness’”: Gender, Race, and the Sublime in Aesthetic Theories of Burke and Kant,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Criticism* 54, No. 3 (Summer 1996), 213.

³⁷⁴ The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states that “The concept of race has historically signified the division of humanity into a small number of groups based upon five criteria: (1) Races reflect some type of biological foundation, be it Aristotelian essences or modern genes; (2) This biological foundation generates discrete racial groupings, such that all and only all members of one race share a set of biological characteristics that are not shared by members of other races; (3) This biological foundation is inherited from generation to generation, allowing observers to identify an individual’s race through her ancestry or genealogy; (4) Genealogical investigation should identify each race’s geographic origin, typically in Africa, Europe, Asia, or North and South America; and (5) This inherited racial biological foundation manifests itself primarily in physical phenotypes, such as skin color, eye shape, hair texture, and bone structure, and perhaps also behavioral phenotypes, such as intelligence or delinquency.” These historical perceptions are continually challenged both scientifically and philosophically, with some denying the existence of races. Peter Wade and others offer this perspective in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: “Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that ‘races’ are cultural interventions reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of western European conquests beginning in the 15th century” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/race-human>). I use race here and elsewhere in this paper as it would have been understood by the historical figures under discussion. See Michael James and Adam Burgos, “Race,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/race/>.

³⁷⁵ Armstrong, 213.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

United States, the sublime exoticism of women and blackness extended to all people of color, including the indigenous populations of North America. This expansion is apparent in the Indianist movement from about 1880 through the 1920s. Consequently, the exoticism identified by Burke and Kant as contrasted with the supposed superiority of the Aryan “race,” became wildness in the United States to fit the exceptionalist narrative wrought by its supporters. Depictions of Native Americans as “Noble Savages” and the non-human descriptions forced upon black people, originated from the threat of a falsely perceived inherent wildness associated with darker skin color.³⁷⁷

WHEELOCK’S SUBLIME

CARLISLE

Late in September of 1887, *The Indian Helper*, the weekly publication of the Carlisle, (PA) Indian School announced an essay contest inviting students to address the question, “Is it right for the Government to stop the teaching of the Indian languages in Indian schools?”³⁷⁸ Two months later, the winning entry was printed proudly on the front page.

The successful essayist sided in favor of the United States Government, boldly declaring,

It [the Indian language] is a language that is of no use in the world, and should not be kept any longer. You can’t express a wise idea, with the Indian language in a way that would be wise and you can’t make a law with it, and you can never make a speech as well and as good, as you would with the English language. Why?

³⁷⁷ See Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Ltd., 2001); Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018).

³⁷⁸ “One Dollar for the Best,” *The Indian Helper* (Carlisle, PA) 30 September, 1887.

Because the Indians never made laws, never saw so many things to talk about as the white men see, and do not do much thinking for the future.³⁷⁹

Later, the author calls the panoply of Indian languages a “disgrace to the Government,” and suggests that “it is also the cord that pulls down the race, who have been bound by the same cord to ignorance and barbarism for centuries.”³⁸⁰ In conclusion, the essayist asks,

Now, which will the Government undertake to do, and which would be the quickest way to civilize the Indians, to teach the 60,000,000 of white people, the Indian language or teach the little hand-full of Indians, the English language. A true missionary and a true friend of the Indians, would have seen long ago that it is wasting time, in teaching the Indians in their own language, the civilized ways of living, etc., of the white men.³⁸¹

For his efforts, the winner received the grand prize of one dollar.³⁸²

The youthful author of the essay was the sixteen-year-old Dennison Wheelock (1871-1927), a member of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. Two years had passed since Wheelock arrived at Carlisle on September 30, 1885, and his essay reflects his early experiences as a pupil at the nation’s first federally-funded, off-reservation boarding school. During his time at Carlisle, he quickly became a favorite among the predominantly white faculty and caught the attention of the school’s founder, Brigadier General Richard Henry Pratt (1840-1924). A New York-born veteran of the Civil War, Pratt adhered to the “melting pot” ideology of his day and believed that the only way to

³⁷⁹ Dennison Wheelock, “Is It Right for the Government to Stop the Teaching of Indian Languages in Reservation Schools?” *The Indian Helper* (Carlisle, PA) 18 November 1887.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² That figure amounts to approximately \$28.81 in today’s currency. <https://westegg.com/inflation/>.

uphold the nation's declaration that "all men are created equal," was to integrate blacks and Native Americans through "educational, industrial and moral training," enabling them to become "equal, and competitors for the benefits of our American life."³⁸³ Pratt's theories of cultural assimilation became the fundamental ideology of the Carlisle School.³⁸⁴

Wheelock's experience at Carlisle and his relationship with Pratt shaped many of his views regarding the place of indigenous peoples in American culture. His career as a band director and composer, as well as his work as a lawyer in Wisconsin and Washington D.C., illustrate a lifelong commitment to both his tribal and adopted nations. This commitment is evident in Wheelock's views on language, culture, and education, which manifest themselves in his music, particularly the *Suite Aboriginal* (1900). In this work, Wheelock confronts his perceived otherness as well as the sublime Other of Americanness by amalgamating different, and sometimes hostile cultures, thus reconciling the disruption of his relationship between Self and Other.³⁸⁵

MUSIC FOR THE MUSICLESS

The teaching of music at Carlisle, like language, was to further acculturate its students to Western ideals. Laurence Hauptman notes that Captain Pratt "consciously

³⁸³ Richard Henry Pratt, *The Indian Industrial School: Its Origin, Purposes, Progress and the Difficulties Surmounted* (Carlisle, PA: Hamilton Library Association, 1908), 5.

³⁸⁴ It is worth noting that Pratt is associated with the first documented use of the term "racism." In 1902, he used the word "racism" to criticize the practice of racial segregation.

³⁸⁵ For a detailed history of the Oneida Nation and its relationship with the United States beginning from their migration to Wisconsin, see Laurence M. Hauptman and L. Gordon McLester III, *The Oneida Indians in the Age of Allotment, 1860-1920* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

tried to emphasize the European music classics at the expense of Native musical traditions.”³⁸⁶ Although these traditions were marginalized, students still managed to incorporate their music into special school events. Outside the classroom, there was more freedom to participate in music-making that combined indigenous and Western music.³⁸⁷ In June 1890, *The Indian Helper* included a description of the musical events at one particular exhibition.

We had piano duets, singing duets, choir singing, quartettes and sextettes [sic], operatic and plain, by babies and old men, music on horns and music without, red music and white music, and all kinds of music.³⁸⁸

The center of musical life at Carlisle, however, was the marching band. Owing to Pratt’s military background and emphasis on regimentation, the drill-based performance ensemble seemed an ideal tool for re-shaping young Native Americans. As other Indian schools opened across the country, the marching band became a central organization at many of these federal institutions. Additionally, as Hauptman observes, “The precision regimen of marching bands at the schools brought Indians from diverse tribal communities together working in harmony for a common goal. While being told to play the European classics, these ensembles actually promoted a sense of group achievement and fostered Pan-Indianism.”³⁸⁹ What began as a unique musical experiment resulted in a standardized practice of assimilation among young native peoples.

³⁸⁶ Laurence M. Hauptman, “From Carlisle to Carnegie Hall: The Musical Career of Dennison Wheelock,” in *The Oneida Indians in the Age of Allotment, 1860-1920*, edited by Laurence M. Hauptman and L. Gordon McLester III (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 113.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

³⁸⁸ “As was anticipated,” *The Indian Helper* 5, no. 42 (June 20, 1890), 2.

In February 1896, *The Red Man* re-printed a laudatory history of the first fifteen years of the band at Carlisle.³⁹⁰ The introduction aptly illustrates sentiments surrounding the band’s purpose and influence at the school and is worth reproducing here:

Possibly no more notable proof “that man is the most pliable of all substances” can be had than that furnished by the Carlisle Indian Band. When we remember that only a few years ago the members of this band were without and beyond the reach of our civilization and were perfectly ignorant of music as we know it in this age, and then note that among the many fine bands we have in this country they rank to-day with the foremost in popular favor a spectacle is presented in which our fancy even, cannot conceive of a greater change. The appreciation of the efforts of the band results from proficiency in musical interpretation, and not so much from the uniqueness of the organization as might be expected.³⁹¹

The author of the article perpetuates the racist ideology that Native populations were “beyond the reach” of American civilization. However, through music, it is implied that the students were able to change their identity to one that could be appreciated, even valued. This approach would be a primary strategy for the Carlisle School. The author continues,

During the first year’s existence of the school, the two great musical instruments to be heard were the *tom tom* and the Indian flute, which were as annoying and unmusical as they were constant in their use. From early morn until obliged to retire at night, the only musical sounds coming from the boys quarters were the tom tom, tom tom, tom tom, and



or other like melody. The aim of the school being the complete transformation of the Indians in respect to their ambition, habits, language, and the substitution of

³⁸⁹ Hauptman, 114.

³⁹⁰ The author of the article is identified only as D.M.W. While it is only possible to speculate the identity of the author, based on the content and opinions expressed toward Native languages and the amount of detail contained in the article, the author was probably Dennison Wheelock.

³⁹¹ D. M. W., “The United States Industrial School Band,” *The Red Man* 13, no. 7 (February 1896), 6.

the better elements of civilization in their places, the display of savagery and barbarism, even in song and language, within its very walls were certainly incompatible with the accomplishment of the object in view and necessitated, sooner or later, the entire prohibition.³⁹²

Native culture was thus dismantled; from its inception, because of the presence of approximately fifty-four different languages among students at the school, Pratt prohibited the use of native languages at Carlisle.³⁹³ As a result, English was not only the rule, it became the only way students could communicate with each other. However, songs in the student's native languages were never prohibited, as author D. M. W. states, "To take them away was to take away the source of their enjoyment and happiness."³⁹⁴ Despite this lip service to the students' happiness, Pratt nevertheless sought ways to replace "the Indian drum and flute with clarinets , cornets, and pianos."³⁹⁵

In 1881, the Bostonian philanthropist Eleanor Baker (1806-1891), visited Carlisle and offered to support Pratt and his mission in any way possible. Following her offer, Pratt asked, "Since you have been here you have heard the *tom tom* and Indian singing down in those quarters?" Replying that she had, Pratt then admitted, "I want to stop that, but I feel it wouldn't be fair to do so unless I can give them something else as good, or better, on the same line. If you will give me a set of brass band instruments I will give

³⁹² Ibid., 6.

³⁹³ Ibid. Some students came from as far as Alaska to attend school at Carlisle (Hauptman, 116). The practice of English-only schooling was also used at institutions in Canada and other colonized areas such as Australia and New Zealand. See Andrea Smith, "Indigenous Peoples and Boarding Schools: A Comparative Study," prepared for the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2010.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

them to the *tom tom* boys and they can toot on them and this will stop the *tom tom*.”³⁹⁶

Eleanor gifted the school the instruments along with several pianos, and just as Pratt wished, “as the first band became more musical, the Indian songster in proportion became musicless.”³⁹⁷

Wheelock joined the music program at Carlisle in its fourth year as a tenor in the choir and a cornetist in the band. Pratt and the other teachers at Carlisle soon noticed his dedication to practice and hard work. Wheelock began his musical training some years earlier at his home in Oneida, where he watched his older brother play the cornet.³⁹⁸ Additional exposure to band music, particularly that of John Philip Sousa (1854-1932), at the Wisconsin county fairs during these formative years, further deepened his love of music. He took his first music lessons from an unnamed traveling musician from the Tuscarora Nation.³⁹⁹ The lessons lasted only a few months, but as Wheelock recalls, “[In] that time I learned a great deal in music-reading and simple composition.”⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid. Pratt’s prosodic and satirical description of the indigenous music at Carlisle reflects the deficiency of nineteenth-century Western ears to hear the subtleties of indigenous music. His remarks illustrate a reliance on stereotypes that disregards the music’s rich complexities and cultural importance.

³⁹⁸ Dennison Wheelock, letter to Mrs. Richard Henry Pratt, January 9, 1894, folder 567, box 17, Pratt Papers, YU.

³⁹⁹ The Tuscarora Nation were originally from the area that is now North Carolina and Virginia.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

“BECOMING” AMERICAN

After graduating from Carlisle in 1890, Wheelock returned to Oneida, where he worked briefly as a teacher and served as a justice of the peace.⁴⁰¹ However, he would not stay long. Less than a year after his graduation, Wheelock returned to school at the Dickinson Preparatory School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, with a glowing recommendation from Pratt. From 1891 to 1892, Wheelock studied at Dickinson and worked as Pratt’s personal clerk. During that same year, he was appointed as bandmaster at the Carlisle School, a position he retained for over eight years.

Under Wheelock’s direction, the band drew in numbers and popularity as word spread of the all-Indian ensemble. In October 1892, the group traveled to New York together with 350 other students from Carlisle to march in a parade commemorating the quadricentennial anniversary of Columbus’s arrival in the Americas.⁴⁰² In front of the thirty-one-piece band, three students carried a banner with the words “Into civilization and citizenship” emblazoned across it. Here was Pratt’s dream made a reality, overseen by his protégé, Wheelock. New York papers such as the *New York Mail* and the *New York Recorder* heaped praise upon Wheelock and the band and likened the musicians to the students of West Point, perhaps the nation’s most prestigious military school.⁴⁰³ In an article detailing the event the *New York Tribute* observed,

⁴⁰¹ Hauptman, 123.

⁴⁰² This colossal event was organized by bandmaster Patrick S. Gilmore (1829-1892), who died just before it occurred. See David Mark Carletta, “The Triumph of American Spectacle: New York City’s 1892 Columbian Celebration,” *Material Culture* 40, No. 1 (Spring 2008), 19-40; Linda F. Witmer, *The Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1879-1918* (Carlisle, PA: Cumberland County Historical Society, 1993).

The Indian boys marched with perfect step, and as they came opposite the President's [Benjamin Harrison's] stand every head of stiff black hair was bared in respectful salute and with a military precision that no pale-faced organization equaled.⁴⁰⁴

With their blue uniforms, fatigue caps, and the colors red, white, and blue pinned to the chest of each musician, the *New York Sun* declared the band members "Real Americans."

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To the assembled crowds of New Yorkers, Wheelock's uniformed and disciplined band was something familiar. Through appearance and sound, the boys from Carlisle became beneficiaries of the legacy of Sousa and Patrick S. Gilmore and the national sentiments associated with American military music. An image once characterized by sublime wildness was now reduced to patriotic novelty. This transformation was not unique to Wheelock's band. With the popularity of Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows and publications like the penny dreadful, and dime novel, "Indians assumed a starring role in the nation's mythology."⁴⁰⁶ As Steven Conn observes of the *fin de siècle*, generally,

By the end of the [nineteenth century], Euro-Americans clearly hungered for myths about Native Americans, but they wanted them of their own making. They wanted Native Americans as source of entertainment, not history.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ Hauptman, 124.

⁴⁰⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ "Real American's These: The Carlisle Indians Fairly Won the Honors of the Day," *New York Sun* (New York, NY) October 11, 1892.

⁴⁰⁶ Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 226.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The acceptance of Wheelock's band as a symbol of Americanness attests to the power of entertainment in white, American culture. Performed assimilation through music, appearance, and behavior resolved the disruption felt by Euro-Americans and allowed the white Self to accept the Other as one of its own, if only for the time it took Wheelock to march down Fifth Avenue.

SUITE ABORIGINAL

Following their New York debut, notable performances of the band occurred at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893) and Carnegie Hall in New York (1900). In 1900, the band was scheduled to perform in France for the Exposition Universelle. However, after the sudden death of his ten-month-old son Paul, Wheelock refused to attend and Pratt cancelled the trip. In a gesture of respect and sympathy, the Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine performed Wheelock's *Suite Aborigina* at the exposition.

The suite illustrates hybrid characteristics of traditional Native American music through a Western lens. As if he were a white man evoking Indianness, Wheelock's melodies suggest indigeneity but come off instead as romanticized per Western aesthetics. Occasionally referred to as a symphony, the approximately fifteen-minuet suite consists of three movements organized in a fast-slow-fast arc, characteristic of earlier symphonic forms and is scored for winds, brass, strings and percussion.⁴⁰⁸

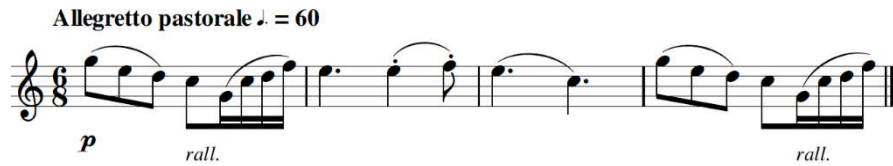
⁴⁰⁸ There is some ambiguity about the original orchestration for Wheelock's *Suite Aborigina*. The piece appears to exist only as a set of incomplete parts. No manuscript or published score have been located. Records held by Carnegie Hall, NY state the premier on March 28, 1900 was performed by the United States Carlisle Indian school Band under the direction of Wheelock suggesting the original was scored for

Although Wheelock bases the work on pentatonicisms, the key centers for each movement illustrate a relationship of thirds with the first primarily in C Major, the second in C Major and F Major, and the last movement in A Major. While Wheelock did not provide a program for the work, each movement has a descriptive title that creates an image used to frame the music: “Morning on the Plains,” “The Lover’s Song,” and “The Dance of the Red Men.”⁴⁰⁹ Wheelock begins the suite with a pastoral representation of a pastoral moment on the prairie scored for oboe and horn solo accompanied by woodwinds and tremolo strings. It is ternary in form (ABC) and outlines a fast-slow-fast arc that mirrors in overall form of the suite in miniature. Wheelock’s orchestration and melodic material of the A section seem to be directly influenced by Edvard Grieg’s *Morgenstimmung* (“Morning Mood”) from *Peer Gynt*, Op. 23 (1875). Both Wheelock’s and Grieg’s works are scored in a triple-compound meter, offer similar rhythmic motifs and an identical tempo marking, follow a pentatonic pattern, and begin with exactly the same four scale degrees: 5 3 2 1 (see Figure 5.1).

wind band. The string parts may have been added later by Edward Beyer before being published by Harry Coleman of Philadelphia, PA in 1900.

⁴⁰⁹ Although the Oneida are not considered “Plains” Indians, the concept of living on the plains or American prairie became a generalizing trope for characterizing Native Americans.

Dennison Wheelock: *Suite Aboriginal*, “Morning on the Plains,” mm. 1-4



Edvard Grieg: *Peer Gynt* Op. 23, “Morning Mood,” mm. 1-4 (Transposed)

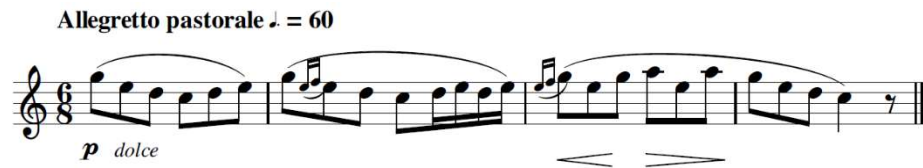


Figure 5.1. Dennison Wheelock and Edvard Grieg comparison of thematic material.

By the time Wheelock composed his *Suite Aboriginal*, Grieg was considered “one of the most popular composers in western homes and concert halls,” due in part to his “strong appeal to public taste.”⁴¹⁰ Grieg’s “Morning Mood” appeared in various arrangements and transcriptions, including wind band. The prolific composer and arranger Theodore M. Tobani (1855-1933) produced one such arrangement, which was published by Carl Fischer in 1889, two years before Wheelock’s *Suite*. Based on the popularity of Grieg’s music and its availability as an arrangement for wind band, it is likely Wheelock was familiar with the piece and even played it with his band.⁴¹¹ However, removed from the original context of the play, “Morning Mood” became a

⁴¹⁰ John Horton and Nils Grinde, “Grieg, Edvard,” *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed May 31, 2020.

⁴¹¹ Published articles referencing the band’s repertoire include Grieg as a composer, however, *Peer Gynt* or “Morning Mood” are not mentioned by name.

generalized representation of dawn instead of the place-specific scene of a Moroccan desert. Wheelock takes advantage of this ambiguity of place and pentatonicism's ties to an imagined past to relocate the music to the American prairie. Jeremy Day-O'Connell notes that "the pentatonicism of the nineteenth century largely referenced 'lost' aspects of human culture, the perceived utopias of a pastoral and spiritual past no longer possible with the encroachment of urban, industrial lifestyles on the one hand and Enlightenment humanism on the other."⁴¹² Throughout the suite, Wheelock utilizes pentatonic scales to allude to places and people that were rapidly changing during his lifetime.

The second movement, titled "The Lover's Song," relies on the same pentatonic scale as the first movement. After an extended introduction characterized by gently rocking octaves (mm. 1-25), the song's melody is played by a solo flute beginning at measure 26. After this initial statement, the rest of the ensemble takes over the melody beginning at measure 47 while the flute continues a prominent role with a descant (see Figure 5.2).

Wheelock: Flute solo, "The Lover's Song," mm. 26-34



Wheelock: Flute solo, "The Lover's Song," mm. 47-53



Figure 5.2. Dennison Wheelock, *Suite Aboriginal*, "The Lover's Song," Flute solos.

⁴¹² Jeremy Day-O'Connell, *Pentatonicism from the Eighteenth Century to Debussy* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 6.

Wheelock's use of the flute as a solo instrument in both the first and second movements draws on Native American performance traditions where flutes play a dominant role as a melody instrument. Among the Oneida Nation and other tribes in what is now Wisconsin, the flute was traditionally used in courtship while drumming and singing accounted for the majority of regular music-making.⁴¹³ Wheelock's use of the instrument to play "The Lover's Song" recalls its role as an instrument of courtship. While it is unknown if Wheelock took his melody from a traditional Oneida song or if it is newly composed, it bears a striking resemblance to the melody published four years earlier in Carlisle publication *The Red Man* quoted earlier. Nonetheless, the movement establishes a sense of tradition and utility associated with the tribal nations of northern Wisconsin and serves as a signifier of indigenous identity.

The final movement, "The Dance of the Red Men," was perhaps the most popular selection from the suite following its publication.⁴¹⁴ The dance, written in three sections, is energetic and perhaps the most programmatic of the suite. Marked Vivace, the first section, or "Announcement" (mm. 1-11), is in A Major and calls the dancers to the

⁴¹³ "Native American Courting Flute," Wisconsin Historical Society. Last modified February 8, 2007. <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2703>. Additionally, this tradition of flute playing became the invented tradition of the "Navajo flute" as perpetuated by artists like R. Carlos Nakai.

⁴¹⁴ The history of the term "red men" or "redskin" is regularly debated. Linguist Ives Goddard and historian Nancy Shoemaker both state that historical records indicate "red" was used as a self-identifier by Native Americans, particularly in the Southeast, to differentiate themselves from white settlers as early as the 1730s in Indian-European diplomacy. James Fenimore Cooper later popularized the term in his novel *The Pioneers* (1823) which caused a rise in usage among white populations. Over the course of the nineteenth century, "redskin" began to take on a pejorative, racist meaning. At Carlisle, students, including, Wheelock, regularly characterized themselves as "red." In this context, Wheelock's use of the term "Red Men" for the title of the last movement of the *Suite Aboriginal* recalls this history of self-identification. See Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to Be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (1997): 625–44.

festivities with fanfare-like motifs played by the cornets which gives the opening of the piece a martial feel. The music soon relaxes in tempo and rhythm before transitioning into the “Preparation” for the dance. This second section (mm. 12-48), marked *Allegro non troppo*, fluctuates between F-sharp Minor and A Major and is characterized by arpeggiated triplets interrupted by persistent, drum-like eighth notes that eventually build to a fortissimo climax (m. 46) marked by rim shots and declamatory “ta-da” statements by the ensemble. Following two full measures of eighth notes played by a muffled drum (mm. 49-50), the piece finally gives way to the advertised “Dance.” Here, the simple triple meter, persistent dotted rhythms on the first beat of each measure, and the emphasis on beat three suggest the influence of the mazurka (see Figure 5.3).

DANCE

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 50-54) begins with a muffled drum part in the third staff, followed by a fortissimo (*ff*) section in the first two staves. The second system (measures 55-64) starts with a *dim.* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic, a *rit.* section, and ends with a *pp* dynamic. The score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Figure 5.3. Dennison Wheelock: “The Dance of the Redmen,” mm. 50-64.

While not uncommon to find mazurkas on the programs of band concerts across the nation, its inclusion as the finale of a suite composed to represent Native American people and places creates yet another hybridized, intersectional moment in the overall aesthetic. Wheelock may have used the mazurka as an allusion to American popular culture, much like Bristow's use of the polka in the *Jullien Symphony*. However, the mazurka never achieved the same level of popularity as the polka in the United States, nor did it have the same patriotic overtones. A more likely explanation for Wheelock's inclusion of the dance is probably due in part to its popularity in wind band literature as a carry-over from American dance halls of the nineteenth-century. Wheelock's mazurka is more about assimilating a successful genre to close a symphonic work than staking a claim of uniqueness.

The aesthetic disruption between the piece's programmatic subject and Westernized sound calls attention to the movement's title, "The Dance of the Red Men," foregrounding its hybridity, more so than the previous two movements. It is possible that "The Dance of the Red Men" illustrates the image of the "enlightened Indian" that Wheelock spent his life emulating and promoting. Much like Wheelock's band from Carlisle, the music is the stylization, from a white perspective, of an indigenous society that does not challenge American ideals or untruths. Consider the "War Dance" from Charles Skilton's *Suite Primeval* (1915), or the "Wolf Dance (War Song)" that concludes Charles Wakefield Cadman's *Thunderbird Suite*, Op. 63 (1917); in each of these examples by composers of Anglo-Saxon origin, the Native American subject is treated as

the sublime Other.⁴¹⁵ The stylized indigenous melodies (Cadman claims to have used an original Blackfoot melody transcribed by Walter McClintock) were by then tropes replete with pulsating fifths, repetition, and pentatonic harmonies to retain a sense of primitiveness, nostalgia, or wildness. The repetitive drumming that features prominently in both Skilton's and Cadman's dances appears for only two measures in Wheelock's dance before it transitions into the regimented rolls, flams, and drags of the Western drumming tradition. This compositional choice together with the mazurka is evidence of Wheelock's attitudes toward Native American music. In a 1903 interview that is replete with the "reformist" mentality in which Wheelock was deeply rooted, he stated,

The original Indian music is a strange thing. It is devoid of harmony, but the melody and time are there, and it is easily harmonized. Some great critics say that our aboriginal music is the same as played by all primitive people world over. Chinese music itself is built on the same principles and I am planning now a composition called the evolution of music. I hope to show the growth of harmony. First some of the musicians will come out in Indian costume, playing some primitive melody. Others will follow playing something more advanced, and so on until the whole band is on stage and we are rendering the best grand opera.⁴¹⁶

Wheelock apparently never began work on his "evolution of music," but the elements of his proposed progression appear in the *Suite Aboriginal* from three years earlier.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ European composers also used stylized Native American music in their compositions. Consider Ferruccio Busoni's *Indianische Fantasie*, Op. 44 (1914).

⁴¹⁶ Quoted in Hauptman, 128. "The Most Famous Band in the U.S.—They Really Make Music," unidentified newspaper clipping, (Lawrence KS, August 25, 1903). In the file "Jeanette Senseney [Vocal Instructor, Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1899-1904]," box 29, Pratt Papers, YU.

⁴¹⁷ The *Suite Aboriginal* is the second work in which Wheelock explores the concept of musical evolution. In 1896, he completed a work for band and solo cornet titled *From Savagery to Civilization* which premiered at the seventeenth anniversary of the founding of the Carlisle school. At the event, Wheelock performed as the soloist. A review of the work printed in the school newspaper contained the following description: "sounds produced led up from the wild tom tom, through curious and intricate twists and turns to the sweet and classic strains of civilized horns. It was very appropriate for the occasion and was highly appreciated by the audience." See "The Seventeenth Anniversary of the Birth of Our School," *The Indian Helper* (Carlisle, PA), October 9, 1896, 2.

Although not an opera, one may see the concluding mazurka of the suite as Wheelock's vision of the culmination of musical "evolution." Resultingly, Wheelock's dance is an anomaly. Where others of his generation like Skilton and Cadman tried to preserve an imagined past, Wheelock attempts to create an imagined future. Speaking generally, Michael Pisani notes that "war dances were part of an ancient legacy of induction and survival."⁴¹⁸ While Wheelock's dance indeed recalls his Oneida heritage, it also gestures toward the lengths to which he went to buoy his acceptance—survival—in a predominately white America. It is possible Wheelock believed that with the sublime Other overcome through reason, education, and performative assimilation, only the Self as Other is left to begin a new American identity.

LEAVING CARLISLE

Following the death of his son and the canceled trip to France, Wheelock left Carlisle and from 1900 to 1903 pursued several musical and non-musical endeavors. He returned to Wisconsin where he worked for a time as a newspaperman. Later, he took a position as a disciplinarian at the United States Industrial School at Flandreau, South Dakota. Sometime before 1903, Wheelock became the bandmaster at Willow Grove Park in Pennsylvania where he attracted large crowds and won a gold medal and silver cup for his conducting abilities.⁴¹⁹ In 1903, he accepted a teaching position at the Haskell Indian

⁴¹⁸ Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 90.

⁴¹⁹ Paul L. Stevens, "Wheelock, Dennison," in *The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music Composers and Their Music*, ed. by Paul Bierly (Westerville, OH: Integrity Press, 1991), 837.

School in Lawrence, Kansas.⁴²⁰ At Haskell, Wheelock built the same kind of reputation he left behind at Carlisle, touring across the country and receiving praise for his band's execution of "high class" works by Gounod, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Wagner.⁴²¹ After only a few short years, Wheelock returned with his family to the Town of Carlisle and began studying law. Returning once again to Wisconsin, he passed the state bar exam in 1910 and shortly after opened a practice in West De Pre, where he quickly became one of the most successful attorneys in the Green Bay area.

It was during this time in De Pre that Wheelock became a founding member of the Society of American Indians (1911-1923).⁴²² Consequently, he often spoke at events

⁴²⁰ Haskell began as the United States Indian Industrial Training School, a residential boarding school for Native American children grades one through five in 1884. In 1895, the school expanded to include a "normal school" to help train teachers to work in the home communities of the students. In the early years of the school, the curriculum focused on agricultural education. By 1927, high school classes were added. During Wheelock's time at the school, Haskell was known primarily for its athletics with an emphasis on football. In 1993, the school became the Haskell Indian Nations University and currently offers both associate and baccalaureate degrees (<https://www.haskell.edu>). See also Wyriam Vučković, *Voices from Haskell: Indian Students Between Two Worlds, 1884-1927* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

⁴²¹ "The Haskell Indian Band," *Metronome* 20 (March 1904): 8.

⁴²² The Society of American Indians was the first national American Indian rights organization run by and for American Indians. The organization was a leader in Pan-Indian unity regardless of tribal affiliation and shared many of the ideals of Progressive Era white reformers. Its leaders, self-labeled Red Progressives, were prominent professionals from the field of medicine, law, government, education, anthropology, and religion. The organization adopted a Statement of Purpose that included six principles addressing equal rights, citizenship, and race betterment: "First. To promote and cooperate with all efforts looking to the advancement of the Indian in enlightenment which leave him free as a man to develop according to the natural laws of social evolution. Second. To provide, through our open conference, the means for a free discussion on all subjects bearing on the welfare of the race. Third. To present in a just light a true history of the race, to preserve its records, and to emulate its distinguishing virtues. Fourth. To promote citizenship among Indians and to obtain the rights thereof. Fifth. To establish a legal department to investigate Indian problems, and to suggest and to obtain remedies. Sixth. To exercise the right to oppose any movement which may be detrimental to the race. Seventh. To direct its energies exclusively to general principles and universal interest, and not allow it self to be used for any personal or private interest. The honor of the race and the good of the country will always be paramount." See *Report of the Executive Council on the Proceedings of the First Annual Conference of the Society of American Indians* (Washington, D.C., 1912), 324. See also Hazel W. Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

organized by the society addressing the plight of indigenous peoples in the United States. He fiercely opposed the Bureau of Indian Affairs and often advocated for state and federal recognition of Native Americans as full citizens instead of wards of the government. In 1915, Wheelock traveled to Madison, WI, to argue in favor of repealing an 1849 state law prohibiting the sale of liquor to Native Americans. *The Indian School Journal* reported on the event and compared Wheelock to Don Quixote going out to battle the windmills.⁴²³ In addition to overturning the sixty-six-year-old law, Wheelock hoped to show lawmakers that Native Americans were citizens of the state “with all the privileges as such, and should not be discriminated against.”⁴²⁴ In his argument, Wheelock equated the right to vote with the right to citizenship and cited the approximately 10,000 “voting Indians” present in the state of Wisconsin as evidence.

Despite his continuous advocacy for the rights of indigenous peoples and the fact that he was often called upon by the Oneida Nation for counsel when legal issues arose, Wheelock’s views were often at odds with tribal leaders. As Hauptman observes,

Besides the inner conflicts caused by his Carlisle training, he married outside of his tribe and his son was enrolled as a Chippewa at White Earth. To the majority of his tribesmen, Wheelock’s views—that reservations were a bad thing for Indians, that tribal lands should give way to Indian free simple title, that Indians should fully integrate into American Society—went against their thinking.⁴²⁵

Although Wheelock’s education, political views, vocation, and even his family distanced him from his community at Oneida, they worked together to reconcile him to the great

⁴²³ “Don Quixote’s Gallant Charge on the Wind Mills,” *The Indian School Journal* 9, no. 15 (Chilocco, OK) May 1915, 492.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ Hauptman, 132.

sublime of Americanness. In a letter to the Carlisle graduating class of 1912, Wheelock wrote,

From now on the world looks to the Indian himself, to work out his own salvation. From now on if they are true men and true women, they must deem themselves duly enlisted in the cause of the Indian, and to this enlistment, I would urge them to render their best and highest devotion.⁴²⁶

Wheelock understood that Indian citizenship in 1912 was granted on an individual basis.⁴²⁷ However, the success of one could benefit the majority. Consequently, he believed it was the duty of the newest generation of educated Native Americans to do everything in their power to dedicate themselves to the betterment of their people.

Wheelock also understood from personal experience the price of citizenship and what accompanied a new Americanized identity. In an article published at the time Wheelock began practicing law, the anonymous writer claimed Wheelock had “left the land of his fathers and cast his lot among the white populations,” an act many of his community interpreted as turning his back on them.⁴²⁸ When Wheelock died in Washington D.C. on March 10, 1927, his body was transported back to Wisconsin where he was buried not in the Oneidas’ graveyard, but instead at Woodlawn Cemetery, “the last resting place of the white power structure in Green Bay.”⁴²⁹ Even in death, Wheelock was an outsider to

⁴²⁶ Dennison Wheelock, Letter to Moses Friedman (De Pere, WI: April 1, 1912), Carlisle Indians School Digital Resource Center.

⁴²⁷ For a history of the concept of Native American citizenship, see Se-ah-dom Edmo, Jessie Young, and Alan Parker, *American Indian Identity: Citizenship, Membership, and Blood* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2016). Also, Kim Cary Warren, *The Quest for Citizenship: African and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880-1935* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁴²⁸ Dennison Wheelock Student File, RG 75, Series 1327, Box 134, Folder 525, National Archives and Records Administration.

⁴²⁹ Hauptman, 133.

people. Hauptman notes that after nearly eighty years since his death, some Oneidas still view Wheelock as an “‘apple,’ red on the outside and white on the inside.”⁴³⁰

Although Wheelock’s self-empowerment through performative assimilation into white American culture helped to reconcile the sublimity of his own otherness to that culture, it simultaneously rendered him the Other to the Oneida—and perhaps, failed to erase his otherness to Euro-Americans. This subjectivity of the sublime plays an integral role in the ontology of identity and the perception of otherness. While he could shape the perception of himself to some (including himself), he could not do it for all. Ultimately, what becomes reconciled for some, remains sublime for others.

PRICE’S SUBLIME

In 2009, a large collection of Florence B. Price’s manuscripts was discovered in an abandoned house in St. Anne, Illinois. The property, once Price’s summer home, was being renovated by Vicki and Darrell Gatwood when her music, books, and other personal papers were found.⁴³¹ In 2010, the Gatwoods sold the collection to the University of Arkansas Mullins Library, and in 2018 G. Schirmer acquired the publication rights to Price’s entire catalogue. The resurgence of interest in Price and her

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 132.

⁴³¹ See Alex Ross, “The Rediscovery of Florence Price: How an African-American Composer’s Works Were Saved from Destruction,” *The New Yorker*, January 29, 2018.

music that has come as result of this “rediscovery” is ongoing. While Price was never “forgotten” through the efforts of her daughter, Florence Price Robinson, and scholars like Rae Linda Brown, Kori Hill, and Samantha Ege, her story continues to unfold as new scholarship becomes available. During the writing of this study, Rae Linda Brown’s book *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price* (June 2020) was published.⁴³² In August 2020, the first International Florence Price Festival will take place at the University of Maryland—College Park campus. Because new scholarship becomes available almost daily, Price’s place as an African American woman within the history of American music cannot be completely illuminated at this time. With this study, I intend to add to the conversation the presence of the sublime aesthetic concept in her symphonic works. Here I will briefly introduce the racialized context of her career as an American symphonist before turning to elements of her educational background and compositions. To illustrate the presence of the American sublime within her music, I will close with brief discussions of her first and third symphonies and the ways the sublime aesthetic was inverted.

“NEGRO BLOOD”

In 1903, Florence Beatrice Price (née Smith, 1887-1953) entered the New England Conservatory of Music as a Mexican woman.⁴³³ In what Samantha Ege identifies as “an act of preservation,” Price’s mother listed Puebla, Mexico, as Florence’s

⁴³² See Rae Lind Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020).

⁴³³ Rae Linda Brown, “Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888-1953) in the Context of Her Life and Work” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1987), 22.

hometown despite the fact she was born in Little Rock, Arkansas.⁴³⁴ With French, Spanish, English, Indian, and black ancestry, Price benefited from the ambiguity of her heritage to gain access to one of the most prestigious music schools in the United States. Despite the reality of her American citizenship, it was safer to assume a less threatening racial alias than to fall prey to racist, “derivative attitudes” forged over “centuries of social conditioning.”⁴³⁵

Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1887 amid the cultural and racial prejudices of the post-Reconstruction era. Price’s father, Dr. James H. Smith, was a well-respected and successful dentist, teacher, and author. Price’s mother, Florence Irene Gulliver Smith, was a teacher but later turned to real estate to become a successful business woman. Ege notes that the Smiths fit into the “talented tenth,” a designation created by Northern philanthropists but later used by DuBois in his essay of the same name, to refer to a leadership class among black Americans.⁴³⁶ DuBois declares,

Education and work are the levers to uplift a people. Work alone will not do it unless inspired by the right ideals and guided by intelligence. Education must not simply teach work—it must teach Life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought among their people.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ Samantha Ege, “Florence Price and the Politics of Her Existence,” *The Kapralova Society Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 5.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 2. See also W. E. B. DuBois, “The Talented Tenth”, in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, by Booker T. Washington (New York, NY: J. Pott & Company, 1903); Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 1996).

⁴³⁷ Dubois, “The Talented Tenth,” 75.

Price's class and her mixed heritage afforded her privilege which Ege states, "enabled her greater potential for agency compared to poorer African Americans trapped in post-slavery subjugation."⁴³⁸ Additionally, Price's self-awareness influenced many of her professional decisions throughout her life. However, social status and her relatively light skin complexion were not enough to overcome the generations of imbedded racism.

As a black member of America's caste system, Price would throughout her life experience various levels of exclusion based on the perception of her lack of whiteness and her gender. Following the perceptions of Burke and Kant, Price's otherness related directly to her identity as not only as a person of color but as a woman of color. This otherness all but guaranteed exclusion from white, male-dominated systems such as the United States symphonic enterprise. Artistic tolerance, even recognition by her peers, may have seemed nearly impossible in light of the Jim Crow laws of the 1890s designed to prevent black achievement regardless of social or economic status. Moreover, with the one-drop rule codified into the laws of many locations such as in Tennessee and Price's home state of Arkansas, anyone with any degree whatsoever of black ancestry was considered a Negro and thus fell victim to the racial discrimination legalized during the Jim Crow era. However, through her music, including her first (1931-32) and third (1938-40) symphonies, Price overcame barriers constructed by centuries of tradition to become the first black woman to have a work performed by a major symphony orchestra.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁸ Ege, 2.

⁴³⁹ Although the symphony composed between 1932 and 1932 is designated as her first, Price completed a symphony while studying at the New England Conservatory of Music sometime between 1903 and 1906. According to Rae Linda Brown, the manuscript for this early work is lost.

Just as Wheelock faced the untruths of American exceptionalism and inclusive citizenship while negotiating his place as a non-white composer in the United States, Price likewise navigated multiple identities to find acceptance of her own voice in a world eager to exclude. In an oft-quoted letter to the Russian-born conductor Serge Koussevitzky (1874-1951), Price petitioned the celebrated musician to critique some of her music. From the very start, she acknowledges her otherness. “To begin with,” she writes, “I have two handicaps—those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins.”⁴⁴⁰ Price’s admission to Koussevitzky, whom she had never met, likely originated in pressure not only from white society but from the black community as well. Jack Forbes suggests that both these types of social pressures “lead in the same direction *because both whites and blacks seem often to share the same opinion: the presence of African ancestry is the sole determinant of ethnic status.*”⁴⁴¹ Within this context of hypodescent, Price did not provide additional details of her “mixed racial background” to Koussevitzky; only her sex and blackness truly mattered.⁴⁴²

Had she lived in the eighteenth century, Price would have presented a problem for Edmund Burke. In his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke details how characteristics generally associated with the

⁴⁴⁰ Florence Beatrice Price to Serge Koussevitzky, (July 5, 1943) Koussevitzky Collection, Library of Congress, Music Division, quoted in *Florence Price: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3*, edited by Rae Linda Brown and Wayne Shirley (Middleton: A-R Editions, Inc., 2008), xxxv.

⁴⁴¹ Jack D. Forbes, “The Manipulation of Race, Caste and Identity: Classifying Afro-Americans, Native Americans and Red-Black People,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 17, No. 4 (Winter 1990): 33. Emphasis is original.

⁴⁴² Florence Beatrice Price to Serge Koussevitzky.

sublime (immensity, the unknown, the abyss) also generate or perpetuate dichotomies of race and gender.⁴⁴³ Focusing on the variances between the beautiful and the sublime, Burke theorized that their characteristics are symbolically represented in the differences between femininity and masculinity (beauty/feminine; sublime/masculine). To these distinctions Burke adds additional traits such as lightness/darkness, thus making the following associations:

Beautiful—Feminine—Light Sublime—Masculine—Dark

Here Burke identifies those bodies that create disruption because they are not easily compartmentalized. Although written in 1757, Burke’s observations contained in the *Enquiry* persisted, and similar beliefs existed in the United States during Price’s lifetime. Ege frames Price’s relation with this belief system through what she identifies as “the politics of her existence.”⁴⁴⁴ In reality, the American rhetoric of exceptionalism and citizenship did not readily apply to Price.

In his book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W. E. B. DuBois introduces the concept of double consciousness as a state of existence for all black people living in the United States. He compares this existence to living behind a veil that is manifest in three ways: (1) separation caused by the physicality of having black skin, (2) the inability of white people to view blacks as Americans, and (3) the black person’s inability to see themselves as anything other than how white people view them. The restrictive nature of

⁴⁴³ Armstrong, 215.

⁴⁴⁴ See Samantha Ege, “Florence Price and the Politics of Her Existence,” *The Kapralova Society Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2018).

the veil and the duality of the Self it creates are problematic when engaging with the American sublime. Throughout the stages of the sublime, the existence of the Self is challenged, and the process of reconciliation to overcome this existential crisis is described by Emmanuel Eze as the search for the unity of soul.⁴⁴⁵ According to DuBois, “unity of soul” is impossible when faced with the omnipresence of double consciousness. Typically, the Self and the Other become one after being reconciled through reason and the belief in untruths. For the non-white American, becoming one with something in which you are denied membership requires an alternative approach. In this instance, the Other is Americanness, and DuBois reconciles himself to it through his education. DuBois believed that he was able to transcend the veil through education and that others could do the same. He remarks that he can sit at ease with Shakespeare and Aristotle, figureheads of Western white culture, because of the perspective his knowledge affords him.⁴⁴⁶ Price’s education had a similar effect on her life.

FINDING A VOICE

The aesthetic of Price’s compositional voice is classified by Ege as “distinctly and intrinsically American” as a result of the influences of “location, activity, and community.”⁴⁴⁷ One such location was the New England Conservatory of Music. From 1903 to 1906, Price focused on organ performance and piano pedagogy there, but also

⁴⁴⁵ See Emmanuel C. Eze, “On double Consciousness,” *Callaloo* 34, No. 3 (Summer 2011).

⁴⁴⁶ DuBois does mention another alternative for transcending the veil: death.

⁴⁴⁷ Ege, 2.

excelled at composition and counterpoint under the guidance of symphonist George Whitefield Chadwick (1854-1932). Under his tutelage, Price began to experiment with black folk idioms.⁴⁴⁸ Although her generation was one step removed from the first composers of post-slavery music like Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949), Ege argues that Price nonetheless “aligned herself” with the same preservation and aesthetic goals which Burleigh pioneered. Burleigh hoped to preserve Negro spirituals through modern compositional methods “without robbing the melodies of their racial flavor.”⁴⁴⁹ Price declared her own similar methodology.

Having been born in the South and having spent most of my childhood there I believe I can truthfully say that I understand the real Negro music. In some of my work I make use of the idiom undiluted. Again, at other times it merely flavors my themes. And at still other times thoughts come in the garb of the other side of my mixed racial background. I have tried for practical purposes to cultivate and preserve a facility of expression of both idioms, altho I have an unwavering and compelling faith that a national music very beautiful and very American can come from the melting pot just as the nation itself has done.⁴⁵⁰

For Price, the concept of the American “melting pot” was the source of a national music based on hybridity and acculturation. The various “flavors” of her identity helped to shape her music, ultimately forging pathways to her personal and cultural identity as an

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 5. Steven Ledbetter and Victor Fell Yellin note that Chadwick often turned his teaching responsibilities over to advanced composition students including Horatio Parker (1863-1919), Edward Burlingame Hill (1872-1960), Daniel Gregory Mason (1873-1953), Arthur Shepherd (1880-1958), Frederick Converse (1871-1940), Arthur Farwell (1872-1952), and significantly, black symphonic composer William Grant Still (1895-1978).

⁴⁴⁹ *New York World* (1924). Quoted in Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 271. See also Samantha Ege, 5.

⁴⁵⁰ Florence Beatrice Price to Serge Koussevitzky.

American. She recognized that the Negro spirituals of the past were not only a part of her heritage but that they were also embedded into the nation's history.

In her work on women poets of the American sublime, Joanne Feit Diehl argues that women face common difficulties as they “strive toward apprehension of the sublime.”⁴⁵¹ Addressing the established hierarchical traditions that characterized the arts generally, Diehl asserts that, “In a tradition that would grant [women] at best secondary, provisional status in a cosmos that takes as its primary relationship the masculine me [Self] to the not me [Other], the woman poet must find another source of power.”⁴⁵² Their resultant poetry thus displays an “individual sense of alienation and, consequently, their need to employ a language that proves its own defense. Theirs is a poetics that rejects the accredited meanings of tradition to quest after forms that will adequately express the voice of the woman as well as the poet.”⁴⁵³ To adequately express her power and voice as a woman of color and a composer, Price adapted the traditional Western rhetoric of the symphony to align with “the long history of diasporic African composers who integrated vernacular styles with classical models.”⁴⁵⁴ Evidence of this hybridity manifests as “double consciousness” as Price works to reconcile the “politics of her existence” with the untruths of the Western symphonic tradition.

⁴⁵¹ Joanne Feit Diehl, “In the Twilight of the Gods: Women Poets and the American Sublime,” in *The American Sublime*, edited by Mary Arensburg (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 210.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ege, 5.

When DuBois addressed the concept of double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Price was just beginning her music studies at the New England Conservatory. Double consciousness attempts to describe the awareness of multiple identities that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the Self to reconcile into a singular identity. DuBois described the sensation as

always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.⁴⁵⁵

DuBois's focus is limited to the relationship between blackness and Americanness: how the Self is seen by the Other. However, this perspective threatens to deny the Self's sovereignty and, as Samir Dayal explains, "stresses the performativity of the subject."⁴⁵⁶ Price addressed these issues in her letter to Koussevitzky when she asked him to "hold in check" the realities of her Self to let her music speak for itself. Dayal supports similar expanded applications of double consciousness. He suggests that "Doubleness is more productively conceived as the interstitiality of entering (or leaving) and destabilizing the border zones of cultures, as fracturings of the subject that resists falsely comforting identifications and reifications."⁴⁵⁷ The "falsely comforting" rhetoric of exceptionalism often leads to the exclusion of multiple people and ideas, a situation often seen in the

⁴⁵⁵ W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publication, Inc., 1994), 2. Citations refer to the 1994 edition.

⁴⁵⁶ Samir Dayal, "Diaspora and Double Consciousness," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996), 48.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

exclusionary environment of the American symphony. Price and many other composers and performers of color necessarily trod the boundaries of culture, race, and gender to reconcile the reality of Self with the external perceptions of others. Within the Eurocentric or “neocolonial manipulation” of the United States’ symphonic enterprise, diasporic double consciousness disrupts established untruths and necessitates the need for alternative reconciliation, if American-style overcoming of the sublime is to occur. Addressing Price’s disruption of Western music history, Ege states, “[Price] does not fit the linear progression perpetuated by this history; and to complicate matters further, the politics of her being and the features of her style warrant an altogether different kind of framework for understanding—one that does not ‘Other’ or marginalize her experiences and achievements.”⁴⁵⁸ To this end, the following discussion is an effort to contextualize her music within the broader concept of the American sublime.

SYMPHONY NO. 1: THE HYMN

Between 1931 and 1945, Price wrote four symphonies. The First in E Minor, written between 1931 and 1932, is Price’s initial foray into the symphonic genre and represents her early compositional style. The Second Symphony in G Minor, was composed in 1935 but is incomplete. The Third Symphony in C Minor was composed between 1938 and 1940 as a commission by the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Music Project. Her Fourth Symphony in D Minor remained unperformed until 2018. I

⁴⁵⁸ Ege, 9.

focus my comments here to Price's First and Third Symphonies to demonstrate her negotiation of cultural and national untruths. Accordingly, Rae Linda Brown describes Price's Symphony No. 1 in E Minor (1931-32), for which Price won first prize in Chicago's Wanamaker Music composition Contest in 1932, as "the musical culmination" of the Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Movement.⁴⁵⁹ She asserts that the "affirmation of black cultural heritage" that the movement provided black artists, writers, and musicians had a "decisive impact on Price."⁴⁶⁰ The symphony contains "spiritual-like themes, characteristic dance music, cross-rhythms, call-and-response organizational procedures, dominance of a percussive, polyrhythmic approach to music, off-beat phrasing of melodic accents, and the inclusion of environmental factors such as hand-clapping and foot-tapping" which Brown identifies as imprints of the New Negro Movement on Price.⁴⁶¹ Brown's analyses of both symphonies precede the 2008 AR Edition of the scores.⁴⁶² Her research thoroughly describes each symphony and provides context for Price's compositional procedures. From her analysis, I will select features from each work to illustrate their relationship with the American sublime.

Price's First Symphony is scored for doubled woodwinds (piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon), four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, and strings. She

⁴⁵⁹ Price received \$500 for her symphony, approximately \$9,500 in today's currency. <https://westegg.com/inflation/>. She also won first prize in the piano composition category for her Piano Concerto and received \$250 (\$4,750 today). Price, xlii. See also Brown, 30-31.

⁴⁶⁰ Price, xlii.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² See *Florence Price: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3*, edited by Rae Linda Brown and Wayne Shirley (Middleton: A-R Editions, Inc., 2008).

also includes percussion parts for snare drum, cymbal, bass drum, triangle, large and small African drums, crash cymbals, wind whistle, celesta, cathedral chimes, and orchestral bells. The approximately forty-minuet work is in four movements: Allegro [ma] non troppo (E Minor); Largo, maestoso (E Major); Juba Dance—Allegro (C Major); Finale—Presto (E Minor). I will focus my comments to the third movement, specifically Price's use of a newly composed hymn.

Raised in an active Presbyterian home in Little Rock, Arkansas, Price's early exposure to sacred music had a lasting impact on her music.⁴⁶³ During these early years, Price demonstrated a talent for the piano and organ and would often play for local church services. She continued her keyboard studies while at the New England Conservatory. From 1903 to 1906, Price took organ lessons with Henry Morton Dunham (1853-1929), eventually completing a Soloist's Diploma in organ, "the highest attainable certificate awarded by the Conservatory," in just three years.⁴⁶⁴ Dunham taught at the conservatory of over fifty years from 1875 until his death in 1929, during which time he gained the reputation as a gifted soloist, composer, and editor.⁴⁶⁵ After moving to Chicago with her family in 1927 during The Great Migration, Price won a scholarship to study orchestration at the American Conservatory of Music in 1929. It was while she was in

⁴⁶³ Barbara Garvey Jackson, "Florence Price, Composer," *The Black Perspective in Music* 5, No. 1 (Spring 1977): 32.

⁴⁶⁴ Price, xix. See also Adel Heinrich, *Organ and Harpsichord Music by Women Composers: An Annotated Catalog* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 313.

⁴⁶⁵ Dunham studied organ at the New England Conservatory with George E. Whiting and theory with John Knowles Paine. After graduating in 1873 he spent some time in Europe before returning to the United States eventually succeeding Whiting as organ instructor at the conservatory.

Chicago that she studied with “the Dean of American church music,” Leo Sowerby (1895-1968).⁴⁶⁶ Sowerby joined the faculty at the American Conservatory in 1925 to teach composition and organ, a position he retained until his retirement in 1962. While the extent of Dunham’s and Sowerby’s influences on Price have yet to be explored, her associations with them would have exposed her to the highest levels of organ instruction in the country.

Price’s command of the organ is on full display in the second movement of her first symphony. Composed in the style of a hymn, it interleaves influences including black folk music and European symphonic traditions.⁴⁶⁷ However, as Brown observes, “Price’s interest in church music and the idiosyncrasies of organ sound” form the foundation of the movement’s aesthetics.⁴⁶⁸ The hymn’s opening statement is scored for a brass choir of ten instruments (four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, and tuba) playing in four-part harmony. Brown notes that the scoring “is suggestive of organ sonorities” and cites an organist’s use of chorus reeds to contrast the principle or foundational tones of the organ.⁴⁶⁹ The hymn in E Major follows an ABA form and utilizes the pentatonic scale. With a prominent part for large African drum and timpani,

⁴⁶⁶ Heinrich, 313.

⁴⁶⁷ Price, xlv.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xliii-xlv.

⁴⁶⁹ Brown, 94. Chorus reeds (such as the Trumpet, Bassoon, Posaune, and Dulzian) are voiced to blend with the flue chorus of an organ to create a sense of depth or power. Price’s orchestration mimics this chorus registration through doubling at the octave which creates the same aural experience as ranks of organ pipes at sixteen, eight, and four-foot lengths played together.

the influence of negro spirituals is made apparent.⁴⁷⁰ Ultimately, the overall harmonic complexity of the hymn results in a “departure from African-American folk music,” which Brown finds rooted in “classical” traditions (see Figure 5.4).⁴⁷¹

Largo, maestoso

The musical score is for measures 1-5 of the hymn movement. It features seven staves: Horn 1, 2 in F; Horn 3, 4 in F; Trumpet 1, 2 in A; Trombone 1, 2; Trombone 3/Tuba; Timpani; and African Drum. The tempo is marked 'Largo, maestoso'. The key signature is E minor (three sharps) and the time signature is 3/2. Dynamics include *mp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *dim.*, and *[mp]*. The African Drum part is marked '[Large]' and *mf*.

Figure 5.4. Florence Price, *Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Mvnt. II (hymn)*, mm. 1-5.

Already within Price’s hymn, the American sublime is at work. She engages with a remembered past that becomes enveloped in the reality of her place in time through sonic allusions to historic black culture combined with traditionally white musical forms.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Price, xlv.

American Protestantism is evoked by the organ and the hymn structure itself; this Christian emblem hearkens back to the ideological sublime, one of the foundational elements of American sublimity.⁴⁷² Completing the sublimity of Price's hymn is that the melody is her own.⁴⁷³ Just as its "quotationless autonomy" characterizes Bristow's new hymn at the completion of his "Jullien" Symphony nearly eighty years earlier, Price's hymn demonstrates the same "self-trusting sublimity" in her search for selfhood.⁴⁷⁴ However, her "discourse with the prior" that is apparent throughout the movement is more personal than Bristow's. Bristow's hymn, to use a phrase from Wilson, "troops forth replenished and grandiose" from an abyss of nothingness.⁴⁷⁵ For Price, the abyss is internal and her confrontation with it is a confrontation with her own Self. Thus, the relationship between Self and Other is like an image reflected in a mirror—a double-consciousness, two-ness, second-sight, Self and Soul.⁴⁷⁶ To overcome the effects of the void, one must find one's "true self" or "true consciousness."⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² See the introduction to the study.

⁴⁷³ Brown, 94.

⁴⁷⁴ Wilson, 136.

⁴⁷⁵ Here Wilson is referring to Walt Whitman in "Song of Myself." Refer to the analysis of Bristow's hymn in Chapter Four.

⁴⁷⁶ Eze, 888.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 887.

SYMPHONY NO. 3: “OF SELF AND SOUL”

Emmanuel Eze identifies within DuBoisian double-consciousness a quest for the “soul” (Self) that is both the “quest for a historical racial authenticity and social justice,” and the quest for “unity of self.”⁴⁷⁸ Price participated in this quest in her First Symphony, eventually furthering it through her Third (1938-40). From the latter’s premiere on November 6, 1940, critics admired Price’s unity of voice, history, and power apparent throughout the Third Symphony. After hearing the work for the first time, J. D. Callaghan of the *Detroit Free Press* exclaimed, “Mrs. Price [...] spoke in the musical idiom of her own people, and spoke with authority.”⁴⁷⁹ The idiom Callaghan references is the product of two significant influences that Brown identifies as the equalizing influence of the Great Depression and the writings of young black intellectuals of the Chicago Renaissance.⁴⁸⁰

Price had lived in Chicago for eleven years before beginning work on her third symphony. In that time, she had composed several other works like *Ethiopia’s Shadow in America* (1932), and the *Mississippi River Suite* (1934), a thirty-minuet work that portrays a journey down the Mississippi River. These programmatic works illustrate the influences of black culture and history on Price’s music during her time in Chicago. Additionally, the presence of prominent black writers like Richard Wright (1908-1960), Margaret Walker (1915-1998), and Arna Bontemps (1902-1973) created an atmosphere

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 889.

⁴⁷⁹ Quoted in Price, xlviii. See also J. D. Callaghan, *Detroit Free Press*, November 7, 1940.

⁴⁸⁰ Price, xlviii-xlix.

where new potentialities for black art could take place.⁴⁸¹ Although Price was not directly involved with many writers of the Chicago Renaissance, she developed close relationships with several composers and musicians. Most notably among her circle were Nora Douglas Holt (1895-1974), Irene Britton Smith (1907-1999), and Margaret Bonds (1913-1972). Their music illustrates a hybridity of styles and forms ranging from neoclassicism and post-tonal techniques to jazz and blues, mirroring the political and social integrationist framework supported by many individuals of the Chicago Renaissance. It was during this time that Price's music appeared on programs given by the National Association of Negro Musicians. Founded in 1919, the organization existed to promote the composition and performance of music by black composers. Price's symphony bears witness to the impact her time in Chicago had on her music.

Similar in form to her first symphony, each movement of the Symphony no. 3 combines elements from various cultures and traditions. The work is in C Minor and has four movements: Andante, Andante ma non troppo, Juba (Allegro), and Scherzo Finale (Allegro). Price employs the forces of a full symphony orchestra including piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets (B-flat and A), bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, celesta, harp, and strings. There is also an expanded percussion section which includes tambourine, snare drum, cymbal, bass drum, triangle, crash cymbals, wood block, sand paper, castanets, slapstick, gong, orchestral bells, and xylophone. In the first movement (Allegro), Price relies on the

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., xlvi.

trope of exoticism through pentatonic modalities to allude to black folk music. However, she avoids establishing a clear harmonic center through the use of whole tone scales, which Brown identifies as a progressive use of black folk modality and a departure from the more conservative tonality of the first symphony.⁴⁸² The movement ends with a Beethovenian coda of forty-one measures (mm. 213-253), which presents the movement's themes in reverse order. The second movement (Andante ma non troppo) recalls the hymn of Price's first symphony antiphonally, another evocation of sacred music. Moreover, Price's orchestration, which includes pronounced writing for "bass choir," alludes again to her background as an organist.

For the third movement (Juba), Price includes a juba dance just as she did in her First Symphony. For Ege, the movement "brings the musical sounds of the plantation to life with imitations of fiddles, banjos and 'patting' rhythms" (see Figure 5.5).⁴⁸³ Described as "New World manifestation of the African *Djouba* and the Caribbean *Majumba*," the juba is an artifact of antebellum America and minstrelsy.⁴⁸⁴ The dance was performed on southern plantations and often accompanied protest songs. Robert Stephens and Mary Junda state that the "patting" rhythms used in the dance developed as

⁴⁸² Price, 1.

⁴⁸³ Ege, 8.

⁴⁸⁴ Beverly Robinson states that "Both Juba and Jube consistently appeared as names of enslaved Africans who were skilled musicians and dancers." See Beverly F. Robinson, "Africanisms and the Study of Folklore," in *Africanisms in American Culture* edited by Joseph E. Holloway (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 360. See also Genesis 4:21 (KJV), for the biblical figure Jubal who was known for his musical abilities.

Allegro

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts and markings:

- Oboe 1, 2:** *mf*, [a 2]
- English Horn:** *mf*
- Clarinet 1, 2 in B \flat :** *mf*, [a 2]
- Bassoon 1, 2:** *mf*, [a 2]
- Trumpet 1, 2 in B \flat :** *mf*
- Trombone 1, 2:** *mf*
- Trombone 3 Tuba:** *mf*, [mf]
- Timpani:** *mf*
- Snare Drum:** *mf*
- Violin I, II:** *mf*, V
- Viola:** *mf*
- Violoncello:** *pizz.*, *mf*, *arco*
- Contrabass:** *pizz.*, *mf*, *arco*

Figure 5.5. Florence Price, Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, Mvt. III Juba (Allegro), mm. 1-5.

a result of the frequent banning of drums by owners of enslaved people.⁴⁸⁵ To “assert their right to perform percussion,” the polyrhythmic patterns were adapted to the striking of hands, feet, and thighs to imitate the sounds of different drums.⁴⁸⁶ Added texts often contained “codes of insurrection and escape” that addressed, in ways unrecognized by owners of enslaved people, the cruel realities of slavery.⁴⁸⁷ Stephens and Junda assert that particularity in the Gullah communities of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, the juba dance “brought a sense of self” and “reinforced shared values and solidified community ties.”⁴⁸⁸ Considering race relations in the United States during the early twentieth century, was Price “signifying”—performing coded messages—in front of a predominantly white audience with the juba dance?⁴⁸⁹ Certainly, the history of the dance was not unknown to Price, and the fact that she continued to use the juba in her compositions suggests a motive based on something more than just a compositional convenience. What is clear is that Price consciously worked to portray a sense of self and community in the symphony. She explains her motivations:

⁴⁸⁵ Robert W. Stephens and Mary Ellen Junda, “Social Protest and Resistance in African American Song: Traditions in Transformation,” in *Songs of Social Protest: International Perspectives* edited by Aileen Dillane, et al. (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd., 2018), 19.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ William C. Banfield, *Cultural Codes: Makings of Black Music Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010), 82.

⁴⁸⁸ Stephens and Junda, 20. See also Sumangala Damodaran, “Protest and Music,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴⁸⁹ See Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988).

The intention behind the writing of this work was a not too deliberate attempt to picture a cross section of present-day Negro life and thought with its heritage of that which is past, paralleled or influenced by concepts of the present day.⁴⁹⁰

A year later, she reiterated her intentions for the symphony.

I have a symphony [in] which I tried to portray a cross section of Negro life and psychology as it is today, influenced by urban life north of the Mason and Dixon line. It is not “program” music. I merely had in mind the life and music of the Negro of today and for that reason treated my themes in a manner different from what I would have done if I had centered my attention upon the religious themes of antebellum days, or yet the rag-time and jazz which followed; rather a fusion of these, colored by present cultural influences.⁴⁹¹

In both of these statements, Price reminds the reader of Walt Whitman’s assertion that the spirit of American poets “responds to [her] country’s spirit.” Through her music, Price sublimates her reality as she reaches toward a modernized American sublime. The “cross section of Negro life and psychology” is her own interpretation of her “true self”: a hopeful, if not transcendent perspective, which works to reconcile the Self and Soul. As if she were speaking directly to Price, the poet Margaret Walker addresses this hopefulness in “For My People.”

For my people everywhere singing their slave songs
Repeatedly: their dirges and their ditties and their blues
And jubilees, praying their prayers nightly to an
Unknown god, bending their knees humbly to an unseen power;

[...]

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a
Bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second
generation full of courage issue forth; let a people
loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of
healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing
in our spirits and our blood. Let the marital songs

⁴⁹⁰ Florence Price, Florence B. Price to Frederick L. Schwass, October 22, 1940. Letter. Quoted in Price, xlix.

⁴⁹¹ Florence Price, Florence B. Price to Dr. Serge Koussevitzky, October 18, 1941. Letter. Koussevitzky collection, Library of Congress. Quoted in Price, lii.

be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now
rise and take control.⁴⁹²

Margaret Walker, "For My People" (1937)

In the terminology of Walker's symbolism, Price's symphonies may be interpreted as the "marital songs" of two worlds, that of the black artist and American society. DuBois likewise references this partnership. To the question, "What does the Negro want?," DuBois replies, "to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and latent genius."⁴⁹³

Price's symphonies illustrate the sublime relationships of Self and Other, Self as Other, and Self and Soul. The characteristics that define these relationships are evidenced through Price's engagement with the musical past, her response to power and her gestures toward empowerment, and noticeable parallelisms between her compositions and her own experiences as an American woman of color. Although many of her endeavors during her lifetime to "rise and take control" can be viewed as successful, following her untimely death on June 3, 1953, the neglect of her music by American and non-American symphony orchestras and their governing bodies quickly undid much of what Price fought to achieve. Douglas Shadle argues,

The relevant evidence spans nearly a century and uncovers the complex dynamics of race, gender and class underpinning the unsettling "loss" of Price's belongings. Over the course of that century the women in Price's family confronted questions that have routinely haunted African American women in a society that has unapologetically placed their very lives at risk. [...] Identifiable individuals and organizations played an active role in Price's marginalization both during and

⁴⁹² Margaret Walker, "For My People," *This is My Century: New and Collected Poems* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 6.

⁴⁹³ DuBois, 2-3.

after her lifetime—a situation so profound that it jeopardized the existence of her music despite the resistance of Price and her daughter.⁴⁹⁴

The profundity of the situation is that although Price and others did all they could to keep her music alive, the systems of power within the United States that control whose voices are heard nearly destroyed everything. Even with recent interest in Price, hierarchical powers loom large. The sublimity of the “persistent existential threats” that suppressed women and people of color for the last century continue to threaten destruction.⁴⁹⁵

EPILOGUE

The lives of Dennison Wheelock and Florence Beatrice Price illustrate the complexity of the untruths folded within American idealism. Whether they were in the form of a government focused on control and assimilation, or a symphonic enterprise poised as a cultural gatekeeper, the untruths that faced people of color in the early twentieth century shaped their compositional voices. For Wheelock and Price, self-empowerment came from disruption, but that disruption came at a cost. For Wheelock, it meant the acceptance of white communities at the expense of losing his ties with his own people. For Price, disruption caused by her race and gender affected her entrance into a male-dominated musical hierarchy. However, each artist experienced a certain amount of freedom sufficient to develop a unique artistic voice. Throughout their lives, Wheelock and Price retained the hope that their music would stand on its own merits and not be

⁴⁹⁴ Douglas W. Shadle, “What I Wish Everyone New About Florence Price,” *The Classical Alternative* (blog), March 19, 2020, <https://classicalalternative.substack.com/p/what-i-wish-everyone-knew-about-florence>.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

dismissed based on the politics of their existence. The sublimity of their “two-ness” became reconciled in their music.

Ultimately, perceptions of race do affect the sublime experience, particularly when restrictions are placed on what the final determinate relationship can be. However, the emotional responses that trigger sublime thought remain primarily consistent. Anxiety, terror, awe, the threat of destruction; each carries with it an experience wherein the existence of the Self is called into question. The hope of determinacy allows the Self to reconcile itself with sublimity and move forward empowered with the knowledge that the danger is gone. What does change for the composers discussed in this chapter is the impetus for the sublime.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: FINDING EQUILIBRIUM IN THE EVOLVING SUBLIME

*I am here when the cities are gone.
I am here before the cities come.
I nourished the lonely men on horses.
I will keep the laughing men who ride iron.
I am dust of the dust of men.*

-Carl Sandburg, "Prairie" (1918)

Since the beginning in the nineteenth century, the American sublime has played a central role as a motivating force in the creation of works of art, literature, and music as Americans have sought ways to define their relationship with their country. By identifying how American composers adapted the sublime for that purpose, it is possible to develop a deeper understanding of the symphony as a genre in the United States. The reevaluation of nineteenth-century symphonic works concerning the American sublime brings greater meaning to the music and makes an abstract vision of nineteenth-century American identity an audible reality.

Notably, the sublime relationship is not pleasant or contemplative; it is mostly the result of power imbalances. As such, the sublime is uncomfortable and does not illustrate a relationship based on love or admiration, but more so fear, awe, and a sense of personal destruction as the Self encounters in the ineffability of the Other. As I have shown throughout this study, the concept of America is a sublime idea that challenged composers in their efforts to classify it.

Beginning with mountains, rivers, and waterfalls, composers like Heinrich used these emblems of national pride and distinction as signifiers of the Self thereby reconciling the disruption of the sublime experience. Heinrich's musical representation of his internal and external sense of displacement initiated by his experiences with the nation's indigenous populations and specific locations like Niagara Falls, accurately reflected the sense of American exceptionalism that was substantiated in the early nineteenth century by associations of wildness, power, and antiquity.

As some Americans worked to define their relationship with the immensity of the natural world, others looked to the minutiae of everyday objects. Through the domestication of the sublime, concepts of play, tradition, and the family unit became sublime ideas. Old World figures like Santa Claus developed into symbols of New World democratic political achievement, just as in Fry's *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony*. Fry's representation of the American experience emphasizes the domesticized sublime through its allusions to the youthfulness and imagination of a country in its infancy.

At its core, the American sublime is a search for selfhood, or an effort to define how the American Self relates to the world it inhabits. When the Self encounters the Other, the two entities become separated metaphysically as the Self is thrown into a void of uncertainty or nothingness, out of which a new identity must be formed that includes the Other as a part of Self. Bristow's new selfhood is first asserted as a polka but ultimately appears fully formed as an original hymn at the end of the *Jullien Symphony*. This declaration of autonomy is a response to the power of the European symphonic tradition.

Of all the composers of this study, Wheelock and Price show the deepest negotiation of the Self/Other dichotomy. The complexity of their selfhood in relation to the Other ultimately depends on the context in which those two composers are Othered—in contrast to their own ethnic groups, in contrast to the dominant white culture, or both. The negotiation of untruths with the politics of their existence results in a “doubleness” which permits the experience of selfhood as both internal and external. However, even as Wheelock and Price were engaging with the untruths of their day, new modes of sublimity were forming to meet the threat of modernity.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND APPLICATION

By the beginning of the twentieth century, America’s once “free and unlimited horizons” were now littered with infrastructure and technology and the philosophies that characterized the natural American sublime were fading.⁴⁹⁶ Marvels of engineering like dams, railroads, highways, air travel, and photography and film insured that cataracts, rivers, and mountains no longer existed in the realm beyond comprehension. However, as the otherness of American natural landscape diminished, gradually replaced by the sublimity of architecture and technology, the limen of the American mind continued to expand exponentially. I have explored this idea in Chapter Five, where I point out ways that the sublime manifests in the concept of citizenship and authenticity. As definitions of the sublime evolved from the time of Heinrich to that of Price, composers and writers

⁴⁹⁶ Robert Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 170.

looked for new ways to express the unfathomable ideas of their time. Untruths of previous generations were either adapted or negated in response to modernity or were tossed aside for new manifestations of sublimity. Wilson asserts that this process of adaptation enabled the Self to reposition the sublime in such a way that the Americanized version could still be considered relevant to modernist and post-modernist aesthetics.⁴⁹⁷ Through the modernist reification of the sublime and the advent of the nuclear age, the American sublime took on new forms to express even more complex untruths in the search for reconciliation between the Self and an all-consuming nation.

In his analysis of Wallace Stevens's (1879-1955) modernist poetry, Rob Wilson observes that as perceptions of sublimity changed, the Pennsylvania native "reclaimed" the sublime through "self-exaltation": being "happy rather than holy but happy-high."⁴⁹⁸ The act of "self-exaltation," as opposed to sublimation of the self through external elements, exemplifies the concept of American hope, or, in other words, American self-reliance. With this mindset, traditions are overturned, and new forms become possible. Wilson argues that for Stevens, the sublime exists "through countermovements of the spirit which negate ('decreate') false or prior notions of the sublime," even if they are "images" of previous traditions or artifacts.⁴⁹⁹ American music mirrors this change as the feelings from the anxiety-inducing loftiness of the nineteenth century—where composers felt the perpetual need to prove something equivocal to nature's grandeur—evolved into

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 10, 171.

⁴⁹⁸ Wilson, 173. Here, Wilson quotes from Stevens's poem "A Thought Revolved," from the collection *Man With the Blue Guitar* (1937).

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 177.

the decision to be “happy-high.” This sublime, decreed to form a new, more relevant one, is evident in the works of Stevens’s musical contemporary Charles Ives (1874-1954), and accounts for what J. Peter Burkholder calls “a reflection of [Ives’s] own experience” which inspires “an emotionally powerful aesthetic experience in the individual listener.”⁵⁰⁰

Ives’s Symphony No 4, composed between 1910 and the mid-1920s, embodies multi-metrics, quarter tones, and polytonality. The symphony has confounded audiences since the premiere of the first and second movements in January 1927. Olin Downes, the music critic for *The New York Times* from 1924 to 1955, repeatedly acknowledged “something” about the work that spoke of truth and authenticity: something “that lives and that vibrates with conviction.”⁵⁰¹ More recently, Leon Botstein identifies a “sense of eternity” and “spiritual repose,” which “rescue modernity from itself.”⁵⁰² Even Ives himself described the symphony in ineffable terms, stating that the finale, or “apotheosis” to the symphony, has “*something* to do with the reality of existence and its religious experience.”⁵⁰³ This inability to express the inexpressible suggests the sublime. Ives’s symphony deconstructs the traditional sense of the American sublime in what Botstein

⁵⁰⁰ J. Peter Burkholder, “Ives and the Four Musical Traditions,” in *Charles Ives and His World* edited by J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 29.

⁵⁰¹ Olin Downes, “The ‘international referendum concert,’” *The New York Times*, January, 30, 1927.

⁵⁰² Leon Botstein, “Innovation and Nostalgia: Ives, Mahler, and the Origins of Twentieth-Century Modernism,” in *Charles Ives and His World* edited by J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 67.

⁵⁰³ Emphasis added. Quoted in Neil Butterworth, *The American Symphony* (1998; rep., New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), chap. 6.

describes as the “aesthetic anti-thesis [...] of philosophical and moral nihilism [that Ives] feared in the modern world.”⁵⁰⁴ Like his fellow countryman Stevens, Ives knew the decreation of the past was “a necessary step in the creation of a modernist sublime.”⁵⁰⁵ Consider, also, the appeal of wildness and departure from traditional symphonic norms of Heinrich at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰⁶ In Ives is found another composer at the start of a new century confronting modernity through the (de)creation of a sublime tradition. Evocation of the sublime in other works such as *The Unanswered Question* (1908; rev. 1934), the *Concord Sonata* (1911-15), and his *Emerson Concerto* (1913-19), would contribute substantially to the ontological and epistemological study of Ives’s music.

While Ives’s response to modernity is ultimately based on his own relationship with the United States, composers like Aaron Copland (1900-90), Samuel Barber (1910-81), Margaret Bonds (1913-72), and many others perpetuated the relevancy of the American sublime in response to the American experience. Beth Levy notes that several composers active in the 1930s and 40s, particularly Copland, answered the inevitability of modernity (and with it, populism) by waxing nostalgic. By incorporating “pastoral tropes,” Copland romanticized an American landscape that no longer existed, a process

⁵⁰⁴ Botstein, 67.

⁵⁰⁵ Wilson, 180.

⁵⁰⁶ See Chapter Two of this study.

which allowed him “to convert his Russian-Jewish heritage into a convincingly pastoral populism.”⁵⁰⁷

Similarly, émigré composers like Max Steiner (1888-1971), Dimitri Tiomkin (1894-1979), Erich Korngold (1897-1957), and Franz Waxman (1906-67) utilized nostalgia to forge associations with a time and place that no longer existed, and in doing so, declared their Americanness (selfhood). However, recent scholarship on the music of émigré composers shows a complex negotiation between multiple identities similar to those crafted by Wheelock and Price (see Chapter 5).⁵⁰⁸

TEXTED MUSIC

Texted music, though excluded from the present study, is worthy of brief consideration here. Notably, Richard Taruskin has perpetuated the idea that the vocal sublime is “imitation” rather than a true expression of the Romantic sublime, a stance he shares with eighteenth-century minds like the French political theorist Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein (1766-1815).⁵⁰⁹ As Wye Allanbrook observes, “These early romantic writers firmly believed: only instrumental music can express the romantic

⁵⁰⁷ Beth E. Levy, *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 19.

⁵⁰⁸ See Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff, eds., *Driven Into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Ildar Khannanov, “High noon: Dimitri Tiomkin’s Oscar-Winning Ballad and its Russian Sources,” *Journal of Film Music* 2, Nos. 2–4 (2009), 225–250; Christopher Palmer, “Max Steiner: Birth of an Era,” in *The Composer in Hollywood* (London, UK: Marion Boyars, 1990), 15-50; Christopher Palmer, “Franz Waxman,” in *The Composer in Hollywood* (London, UK: Marion Boyars, 1990), 94-117.

⁵⁰⁹ Richard Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2: 645-646.

sublime; vocal music is made earthbound by the tawdry particulars of the word.”⁵¹⁰

Madame de Staël and Taruskin’s viewpoint is arguably correct as far as the eighteenth century is concerned. However, as I have shown throughout this study, the departure of the American sublime from the Romantic sublime requires an alternative approach as a result of its cultural context. “Time does not really need to stop with Beethoven.”⁵¹¹

The central role of literature in the United States as an inspiration for sublime musical expression supports a theory of sung sublimity that retains the rhetorical power of a written text. Consider Foss’s cantata based on Carl Sandburg’s (1878-1967) prose poem “Prairie.” Three years after his arrival in the United States, Foss was engaged in conducting Copland’s ballet, *Billy the Kid* at Tanglewood during the summer of 1940. At the same time, he became acquainted with Sandburg’s poem, which had appeared in the 1918 collection entitled *Cornhuskers*, and immediately began setting it to music. His enthusiasm caught the attention of colleagues, and when asked, “Why are you trying to write so American?” Foss responded he was in love, for he had discovered America.⁵¹²

In a 1944 statement to *The New York Times*, Foss expressed that, “The attempt to develop an oratorio style based on the American soil and spirit is not new, but Sandburg’s

⁵¹⁰ Wye J. Allanbrook, “Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 7, No. 2 (2012), 279.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁵¹² Lukas Foss, “*The Prairie, A Parable of Death, and Psalms*,” in *The Composer’s Point of View: Essays on Twentieth-Century Choral Music by Those Who Wrote It*, ed. Robert Stephan Hines (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 65.; Lukas Foss, Interview with Vivian Perlis (1986). *Oral History of American Music* project at Yale University; as cited in Richard Dyer, CA liner notes for *Lukas Foss: The Prairie*, Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Providence Singers, dir. Andrew Clark (BMOP/sound 1007), 8. Later in life, Foss admitted to other influences that inspired his music such as the country’s geography, politics, and people.

epic poem, it seems to me, offers new possibilities in its earthly and almost religious approach. It is a new expression of an old faith drawn from native soil.”⁵¹³ Here, Foss identifies the transcendental properties of Sandburg’s poem that contribute significantly to the aesthetic of the American sublime. For Foss, Sandburg’s poetry transcended the terrestrial confines of place and became something “almost religious.” The composer relied on his identity as a German-Jewish composer to create something new and unique to his situation. The “old faith” of his German heritage brought forth fresh expressions of identity through Sandburg’s *Prairie*.

Perceiving American subject matter as manifestations of sublime, poets like Sandburg drew on aesthetic elements exemplified in the nineteenth-century works of Whitman. Wilson states that Whitman “derived sublimity from American substances and vernacular forms— ‘to give the spirit, the body, the man, new words, new potentialities of speech,’ words charged with magnitudes of the American democracy, landscape, and spirit.”⁵¹⁴ Sandburg is seen by many as Whitman’s successor. “If Walt Whitman may be called a prophet—a voice crying in the wilderness—,” declared Esther Holcomb, “Carl Sandburg is an answering voice, calling back to the prophet in his own vigorous tongue.”⁵¹⁵ Whitman and Sandburg endeavored to give a voice to the ordinary citizen regardless of origin, status, or beliefs. Sandburg’s decision to establish the prairie as the protagonist in his poem allows him to give a universal voice to this central concept which

⁵¹³ “Events in the World of Music,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), May 14, 1944.

⁵¹⁴ Rob Wilson, *American Sublime* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 136.

⁵¹⁵ Esther Lolita Holcomb, “Whitman and Sandburg,” *The English Journal* 17, no. 7 (September 1928): 549.

grows and develops throughout his narrative. Observing this everyman characteristic, Foss concluded, “through the poem the prairie grows until it becomes the symbol for the all-embracing principle of growth itself.”⁵¹⁶ Perhaps for Foss, who was negotiating his identity as a German-Jewish immigrant living in the United States and his growth as an artist, the all-inclusive democratization of Sandburg’s poem resonated with his own situation, and led him to find inspiration ripe with “new possibilities.” Foss supports this proposal in an essay he wrote during the 1960s, where he described his approach to setting words to music. “The text must be right for me,” he proclaimed, “and right for me in that time of my life.”⁵¹⁷

Sublime feeling in relation to a specific place and time is an act of empowerment in response to power. Foss’s confrontation with the sublime, albeit a positive one in *The Prairie*, presents a relationship between Self and Other that is negotiated through the nostalgia of a remembered, if not alien, past. However, while each experience empowers, not all are laudatory. The second World War (1939-45) and the incumbent Cold War Era (1947-91) brought with it a new and terrifying sublimity, the nuclear sublime. As Americans struggled to comprehend the power of the atom bomb and what its creation meant for the future of the world, writers and composers addressed this sublimity through their respective artforms. Consider for instance, Karl Shapiro’s poem “The Progress of Faust” in which the character of German legend is reimagined as Dr. Faustus, an émigré

⁵¹⁶ Richard Dyer, liner notes to Lukas Foss: *The Prairie*, BMOP/sound 1007, CD, 2008, 4.

⁵¹⁷ Lukas Foss, “The Prairie, a Parable of Death, and Psalms,” in *The Composer’s Point of View: Essays on Twentieth-Century Choral Music by Those Who Wrote It*, ed. Robert Stephan Hines (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 4.

physicist, expelled from Nazi Germany to America where he becomes the architect of the atomic bomb.⁵¹⁸

Backwardly tolerant, Faustus was expelled
From the Third Reich in Nineteen Thirty-nine.
His exit caused the breaching of the Rhine,
Except for which the frontier might have held.
Five years unknown to enemy and friend
He hid, appearing on the sixth to pose
In an American desert at war's end
Where, at his back, a dome of atoms rose.
(Karl Shapiro, "The Progress of Faust," 1947)

This retelling of legend highlights what Wilson identifies as "rapture of the sublime."⁵¹⁹ With rivers and mountains now conceivable, and the question of Americanness no longer a primary disturbance, the threat of nuclear annihilation rendered previous appearances of sublimity inconsequential. If one traces the lineage of this modernist sublime, the trajectory from nature to culture, and then to what Donald Pease calls a "neonature" is clear.⁵²⁰ This new-nature is the result of a landscape "sublimated into atomic energy" in which "the mind confronts a force of atomic energy so vast and final" that it renders all other untruths "ludicrous or mute."⁵²¹ By emphasizing the harnessing of atomic energy in the American desert, Shapiro casts the bomb and Faustus its creator as manifestations of American will to power.

⁵¹⁸ A significant percentage of scientist who worked on the Manhattan Project were emigrés from Germany.

⁵¹⁹ Wilson, 229.

⁵²⁰ Donald Pease, "Sublime Politics," in *The American Sublime* edited by Mary Arensberg (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 39.

⁵²¹ Wilson, 229-230.

How does one reconcile the rhetoric of absolute annihilation? Despite its perceived inevitability, the destruction of the nuclear sublime continues to be reconciled through American hope. This “death of the ordinary self,” as described by Wilson, creates the need for a new “language of passionate elevation that might go on to speak beyond the grave.”⁵²² Popular styles of music display well this search for a voice that echoes from some future place, come what may. Consider Bodleaux Bryant’s (1920-87) “A Mushroom Cloud” (1961). Sung by Sammy Salvo (1933-2020), the song laments, “A mushroom cloud hangs over my dreams. / It haunts my future and threatens my dreams.”⁵²³ Despite feelings of impending doom, the protagonist chooses to continue living regardless of the future: “There’s a mushroom cloud that hangs in the way. / Tomorrow looks black, so we live for today.”⁵²⁴ Bryant’s lyrics recall Emily Dickinson’s declaration from seventy years earlier, “Because I could not stop for Death / He kindly stopped for me.”⁵²⁵ However, while Dickinson’s poem ends by facing “toward Eternity” or death as progression, Bryant’s song suggests that by choosing to live (exercising the will to power), progress continues despite a threatening future.

⁵²² Ibid., 229.

⁵²³ Bodleaux Bryant, “A Mushroom Cloud,” Sammy Salvo, (Hickory Records 45-1138, 1961).

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by R.W. Franklin (1890; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

FINAL THOUGHTS

As I have shown throughout this work, empowerment is a hallmark of the American sublime. Whether in response to established traditions, foreign influences, government policy, racial stereotypes, gender roles, or technology, viewing music through the sublime provides valuable insight into the intersection of nationality, identity, and power structures at any given time. Although my focus has been on symphonic works, the musical examples I have illustrated as part of this conclusion provide points of departure for new studies on the ways the American sublime can be recognized in other genres. Future applications to diverse areas of study such as chamber and solo works, jazz, rap, hip hop, opera, or film music will reveal similar results in a cultural analysis of the United States.

This study has traced the evolution of the sublime from its ideological state, to the natural, and beyond. The disruptions caused by objects and ideas that are beyond the Self and outside of basic comprehension, and the resulting voids of understanding, have resulted in countless artifacts of reconciliation. As rhetoric changes and untruths ebb and wane to reconcile the Self to the Other, the American sublime will continue to manifest in constitutions and symphonies. As Jennifer McMahon observes,

If we recognize the sublime as that aspect of experience that prompts a narrative about our place in the world, then we can see how it would manifest differently at different times, in different cultures. This is because the sublime is not merely given. It may be prompted by the encounter between reason and nature. But the meaning given to this encounter will be based on cultural beliefs and commitments which vary over time. ⁵²⁶

⁵²⁶ Jennifer A. McMahon, "On Jane Forsey's Critique of the Sublime," in *The Possibility of the Sublime: Aesthetic Exchanges* edited by Lars Aagaard-Mogensen (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 90.

Even during the writing of this study, the American sublime has continued to evolve in response to the ever-changing social and political environment of the United States.

Where Whitman once found sublimity in a single blade of grass, current manifestations of the sublime can be found in a single hashtag. As artists, writers, and musicians continue to respond to their environment, the American sublime will likely continue to provide a path to empowerment and selfhood through the sublimity of the American experience.

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APPENDIX A

J.B. WAID, *VARIETY: POETRY AND PROSE*. MONTREAL: J. LOVELL, 1872

Pleasant, peaceful, quiet river,
Limpid, constant, onward ever,
 Gentle waters roll away;
Calm as summer, bright as morning,
Not a look, or sign of warning,
 Naught of danger dost thou say,
But gliding along, mild and strong,
 To the Rapids.

Then

Sporting, murm'ring, tossing, splashing,
Storming, raving, crossing, dashing,
 Troubled waters fret away;
Hasting, pushing, staving, darting,
Islands mad'ning thee to parting,
 Yet thy tumult cannot stay;
But, tearing along, mad and strong,
 To the chasm.

Then

Curving, bending, bursting, breaking,
Sliding, leaping, rushing, quaking,
 Flying waters dart away;
Flashing, sparkling, wailing, rumbling,
O'er the brink an ocean tumbling,
 To a world of foam and spray,
Fierce shooting along, proud and strong,
 We see thee now

In

Stately grandeur, awful wonder,
Hear thy voice in terms of thunder;
 Falling waters roar away,
Pouring, showering, misting, streaming,
Rob'd in rainbow colors beaming,
 Deck'd by Sol's, or Luna's ray,
Swift plunging along, grand and strong,
 To the bottom.

Then

Foaming, boiling, surging, thrashing,
Breaching, swelling, heaving, crashing,
 Furious waters foam away,
Babbling, roaring, brawling, curling,
Gurgling, wailing, whisking, whirling;
 Fanciful thy currents play,
Still pressing along, bold and strong,
 Dimpling, pouting.

Then

Gathering, kissing, whispering, hushing,
Panting, smiling, frisking, rushing,
 Lovely waters roll away;
Winding, eddying, purling, playing,
Lakeward still, and never staying,
 Rustling on thy shining way;
Free coursing along, calm and strong,
 Soon to mingle

With

Ontario's tideless waters—
Long to be thy prison quarters;
 Noble river die away.
But I err, a poet's blunder,
Still I hear thy deaf'ning thunder;
 Here thou art, and here must stay
World-wide wonder, mighty strong
 Niagara!

APPENDIX B

SYNOPSIS OF *SANTA CLAUS: CHRISTMAS SYMPHONY*

SYNOPSIS
OF
FRY'S SYMPHONY,
SANTA CLAUS.

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR JULLIEN'S ORCHESTRA,

And performed with the greatest applause, for the first time,

ON CHRISTMAS EVE, 1853

The following explanations of the design, spirit, and instrumental treatment of FRY'S CHRISTMAS SYMPHONY called SANTA CLAUS, have been supplied by the composer, at the request of M. Jullien.

The first movement, which is slow, opens with a single musical measure of Trumpet solo, being the celestial precursor to the announcement of the glad tidings of the Saviour's coming birth. This is followed by some tender notes on the horns, suggestive that the Messiah's advent is to be one of love. This phrase is repeated in a fresh key. It is then taken up by the whole orchestra as though the assembled hosts of heaven joined in the declaration. This is followed by some soft music, the first violins having a volant trill, accompanied by variously by the other stringed instruments in a singing strain, while the Flute, Clarinet, Hautboy and Bassoon fly seraph-like through different regions of musical space. After a momentary pause, M. Koenig on his Cornet, discourses in an Adagio-Cantabile, on the impending advent of the Saviour—which if sung could be recited in words taken from the Bible. This is followed by some soft strains on the stringed instruments, and some aerial windings on the wood wind instruments. Then follows the Adagio-Cantabile air just played by M. Koenig, given in the most resonant style by all the brass instruments, as though the whole heavens repeated the strain with declamatory force and exultant emotion. While the brass instruments so discourse, the other instruments bound through successive octaves as indicative of the wide dispensation of religious harmony. A few loud chords of fierce character portray the rage of fallen angels, and the first movement of the piece concludes with triumphant major harmonies.

This artistico-historical introduction being concluded, the scene becomes terrestrial and the characters human and of our time. It is the Festivities of a Christmas Eve part, children participating: the clarinet of M. Wuille leading to the Dance, which is intended to be one of rollicking gaiety. This movement suddenly changes to another in which the hautboy of M. Lavigne and the flute of M. Reichert take the leading parts: it is both plaintive and joyous, describing severally and simultaneously the tender affection of kindred meeting after absence, and the exuberant joy of children. The hautboy takes the plaintive part as most consistent with its character, and the flute the joyous expression, as

equally belonging to its peculiarities. It may be remarked, parenthetically, that it is the superiority of music over poetry that is can depict opposite passions or emotions at the same moment; and where the multiplication of speakers or readers would only produce dismal cacophony.

After the just-named movement, sudden, harsh notes on the Brass instruments, followed by muttering echoes on the stringed instruments and by a tumultuous run through several octaves, depict the stern characteristics of a winter's night and the rush of a coming snow storm. The Dance then is retaken; and then instrumentation become lighter and lighter, portions only of the orchestra being heard, to represent the breaking up of the party and the dispersion of the guests. Gentle adieus follow, represented sexually by the masculine Violoncellos and the feminine flutes, hautboys, clarionets and violins.

Slumber is now sought, and The Lord's Prayer is recited on the treble stringed instruments—the violins and violas—according to the pitch of childish voices and the accents of the English Language. This is followed by the simple Lullaby—*Rock-a-by baby on the tree top*—composed of only four distinct notes, and played by M. Wuille on the marvellously human-like saxophone (as just perfected by M. Sax of Paris): the accompaniment to this is a rocking-cradle-like movement on the violins as they see-saw between contiguous octaves, and the violas give the respiration of the infant sinking into slumber. Here these stringed instruments have attached to them mutes, a little addition which softens the sound and renders it dreamy and mystic. While the lullaby proceeds a slight precursor of the snow storm just coming is heard in the violins playing a gliding scale of half-tones. As the voice of the mother ceases by degrees, with the cradle no longer rocking, the scene is changed, and the tragedy of a winter's night is introduced to vary the general character of the joyous occasion.

The composer, after an earnest study of the music of nature, has here essayed to imitate the mournful and sublime tones of the Deity—the howling and whistling of the winds and other winter signs. This is effected, as he believes, by new and true combinations. Connected with this musical painting of external nature is one of Man, representing a Perishing Traveler. Of all instruments it was lately conceded that the most melancholy is the Violoncello, but the genius of M. Bottesini having elevated the Double Violoncello or Double Bass to the rank of a solo instrument, somber pathos yet unachieved in the history of instrumental art can be depicted by this great master of expression. The woe and wail of the Perishing Traveler are therefore entrusted to this Double-Bass player, who gives, amid the whirring notes of the Violins and the supernatural groans of the Trombones, the despairing and dying plaints. Each phrase of these is echoed by the player in harmonics of the ethereal octaves of M. Bottesini's Double-Bass representing the vanishing echoes of the lament, as they would occur according to the mathematical laws of sound. As the voice of the traveler ceases in cold death, the church bell tolls midnight, while a trembling discord is played on the Violins, harmonically unresolved up to the last note of the bell. The hour being tolled, the Violins, at the final stroke of twelve, instantly mount up into their highest regions, which are among the novelties of the instrumentation of this day, being an addition to the upper portion of the orchestral Violin unused by composers a few years since.

While they so discourse the recollections of a new birth in the thin treble of infancy, suddenly is heard in a lower region of the scale, a fresh intonation. This is the Bassoon of Mt. Hardy, which instrument besides its other qualities is at the pitch where it is here taken, the most quaint of all in the orchestra, and hence is chosen to describe Santa Claus. It gives an air in double-time like the trot of horse, accompanied by sleigh bells, and the cracking of a whip. The trotting and bells grow louder, and suddenly Santa Claus reins up his steed with a jerk, imitated by a rasping sound on the stringed instruments. Santa Claus then flies down the chimney to the soft notes of the flutes; the Lullaby is again heard hinting at the children, while harp-like notes on the Violins show the click of the toys and they are thrown in the stockings of the happy little sleepers. Santa Claus then retakes his sleigh as the flutes mount up, and the retreating music of pattering hoofs and tinkling bells dies away. A few whirring notes on the kettle drum speak of the wind-tossed snow, and then is heard in the highest regions of the Violins with the fluttering ecstasy of hovering angels, the Christmas Hymn, *Adeste Fideles*, of which the following is the ancient Latin version:

Adeste fideles, laeti triumphantes,
Venite, venite in Bethlehem:
Natum videte regem angelorum:
Venite adoremus dominum!

The hymn runs then into a swelling note of the whole orchestra, the perfect major chord, which is in sound precisely what a blaze of sunlight is to sight. This betokens the break of day. We are now introduced to the happy household. Knockings awaken the little sleepers with the cries of "Get up! get up! get up!" imitated on the Horn; and so roused the children rush with joy and seize their toys, and the orchestra now plays Little Bo-peep on toy-trumpets, drums, and so forth. A trait from the Introduction of the Symphony, leads to the *Adeste Fideles* (*Hither, ye Faithful*) Hymn which, with grand chorus and orchestra, concluded the piece.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Glen Wayne Hicks is a native of Springville, Utah. After completing a baccalaureate degree in Music Education from Southern Utah University, he attended Arizona State University where he received a Master's degree in Music History and Literature before pursuing a Ph.D. in Musicology. He has presented his research at the annual conference of the Society for American Music (2019) and at regional meetings of the American Musicological Society (2014, 2018). Hicks was awarded graduate teaching assistantships in both his Master's and Doctoral degrees and is the recipient of a graduate fellowship from Arizona State University as well as the Stellhorn Memorial Award. Hicks's research on the music of the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous from 1825 to 1840 will be included in the proposed *Oxford Handbook of Community Singing* edited by Esther Morgan-Ellis and Kay Norton.

After teaching music and ensemble classes at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for approximately seven years, Hicks was contracted as an instructor of record at Arizona State University where he taught the undergraduate survey course in the history of Western music from antiquity to 1750. Hicks is also an organist and active as a board member of the Utah Valley Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. He is also a member of the Society for American Music, the American Musicological Society, and the American Society for Aesthetics.