

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research:
Department of English

English, Department of

Summer 7-31-2017

Living Lore: B. A. Botkin, Folklore, and the State

Kirby Little

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/englishdiss>



Part of the [Digital Humanities Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Little, Kirby, "Living Lore: B. A. Botkin, Folklore, and the State" (2017). *Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research: Department of English*. 133.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/englishdiss/133>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research: Department of English by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

LIVING LORE: B. A. BOTKIN, FOLKLORE, AND THE STATE

by

Kirby Little

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: English

Under the Supervision of Professors Amanda Gailey and Kenneth M. Price

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2017

LIVING LORE: B. A. BOTKIN, FOLKLORE, AND THE STATE

Kirby Little, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2017

Advisor: Amanda Gailey

This digital project explores government surveillance and political action through folklore. The project focuses on the unpublished essay of folklorist Benjamin Botkin titled “Progress: Negroes and Everybody, From Folk Tale to Science Fiction.” Botkin was a prominent academic in his field, and created the theoretical approach to folklore he termed “applied folklore.” Botkin’s approach to folklore gained considerable attention, both positive and negative, due to his unique emphasis on the present time and the ever-changing nature of folklore, and his politicization of folklore as a method for uniting working class citizens. For decades, Botkin was under clandestine surveillance by the F.B.I. for being suspected of communist ties and actions. In January of 1954, F.B.I. agents appeared unannounced at Botkin’s home to interview him. The event left Botkin shaken and altered his outlook on American politics and community. Botkin’s daughter Dorothy Botkin reflected on this change in Botkin’s demeanor later in her life and believed that this event caused a major shift in Benjamin Botkin’s activities and intellectual pursuits.

1. Introduction

This project presents an unpublished typescript that Benjamin Albert Botkin drafted circa 1958 titled “Progress: Negroes and Everybody, From Folk Tale to Science Fiction.” The essay counters the popular conservative sentiment of the time that the movement for social equality for black Americans was moving too quickly and should be taken in small increments to avoid social unrest. In his efforts to expound upon current social affairs and social progress as a general theory, Botkin deploys his knowledge of folklore through numerous references to popular culture of the present and past. The essay contains facets of Botkin’s political and theoretical thinking that are progressive for the time, considering the conservative environment of both academia and the nation at large during the McCarthy era.

While there are lines of thought in “Progress” that reach all the way into contemporary thinking on social equality there are also markers of the entrenched history of racism, ideas that would seldom be expressed by progressive writers of today. Of particular note is Botkin’s assertion that ancient slavery ultimately served a progressive purpose. “Could slavery ever, anywhere, be progressive? Of course it was . . . Humanity advanced only when some men, seated comfortably on the backs of slaves, became philosophers, artists, scientists, technicians, administrators.” This view of ancient slavery has a long history—from thinkers like Aristotle to Hegel—and may have wielded more influence in Botkin’s time, but contemporary scholarship on the subject emphasizes the oppression of slavery. For example, Bernard Williams declares that “if there is something worse than accepting slavery, it consists in defending it” (Williams 111). Dimitris J.

Kyrtatas traces a history of ancient slavery that is based in domination of religion and culture rather than as serving a utilitarian purpose. He asserts that slavery was used to inculcate free people with the ideas, morality, and religions of dominant societies (Kyrtatas). The fact that slavery was looked upon in ancient times as a way to forcefully indoctrinate otherwise free peoples runs counter to older narratives describing slavery as a necessary evil for human progress.

Botkin was a prolific scholar of American folklore, who produced much of his influential work during the socially tumultuous times of the McCarthy era of 1947-1956. Botkin's interests as a scholar centered on American working class identity, and his liberal politics were reflected in his academic work and his approach to theorizing folklore and culture. As a liberal Jewish American arguing against conservative backlash against black civil rights, Botkin was faced with a confluence of identities that were targeted for persecution in the McCarthy era. American attitudes towards Jews were changing during the 1950s, due in part to black and Hispanic veterans returning from World War II who were determined to work against the discrimination they experienced in the military. However, in the struggle for influence over Middle Eastern countries during the Cold War, antisemitism proved to be a valuable tool to the American government, so it was still common (Goldstein 313-4). Botkin's collected papers housed at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Archives and Special Collections span six decades and give a proper representation of his passion for and devotion to the study of folklore.

Botkin faced unwanted attention from the federal government because of his liberal socialist politics that were reflected in his work. For more than a decade, Botkin

was surveilled by the FBI under suspicion of being a member of the Communist Party. The government's interest in Botkin came to a climax when FBI agents questioned him without warning at his residence in January of 1954. This aggressive step was coupled with the environment of fear that had arisen from the McCarthy era, a combination that frightened and subdued many people, and forced thousands out of their jobs on political grounds (Schrecker "Anxious in Academe," 7). It was in the best interest of organizations to self-censure, so outspoken liberal members would often face reprimands or ostracization.

The nation's college presidents and film moguls did not think that Communist professors and screenwriters posed any threat to the nation's security, but they did worry that retaining such people might draw the wrath of the right . . . In every sector of American society, liberal institutions and individuals surrendered people's rights. (Schrecker 2004, 1069-70)

Shortly after his experience with the FBI, Botkin delayed in publishing any book, and after publishing the ones he had already begun work on he retreated from the public sphere, publishing only academic journal articles and book reviews. I contend that the climate of fear and intimidation purveyed by McCarthyism—which became a personal reality to Botkin upon his interview—discouraged Botkin from producing work that promoted his progressive ideals. Whether it was out of fear or a growing disenchantment, Botkin began to recede from publishing his work.

The essay is presented with the intention of demonstrating the progressive ideas that can potentially be silenced by conservative coercion. It is uncertain why "Progress" was never published, but there is evidence supporting the idea that Botkin withdrew from

publishing his work because of either a fear or apathy instilled in him by McCarthy era intimidation of liberals. There is evidence that Botkin felt intimidated by the hostilities of the federal government towards liberal socialists and communists, but one can only speculate how this would have affected his drive to engage in professional and political endeavors. In his correspondence and the essay, Botkin expresses a sense of defeat and apathy regarding the efficacy of democratic political engagement that must have affected his interest in political and professional engagement.

2. Biography

Botkin was born February 7, 1901, in Boston, Massachusetts to Lithuanian Jewish immigrants. He graduated from Harvard University in 1920 magna cum laude with a B.A. in English, and received his M.A. in English from Columbia University in 1921 and became an English instructor at University of Oklahoma later that year (Hirsch). He pursued his Ph.D. under William Duncan Strong and the folklorist Louise Pound at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, receiving it in 1931 (Hirsch 13). In 1938 Botkin became the national folklore editor and chairman of the Federal Writers' Project, a position he maintained until 1941. After this, Botkin was head of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress from 1942 to 1944 and was also the president of the American Folklore Society. He married his wife Gertrude Fritz in 1925. They had two children together, Daniel Botkin and Dorothy Botkin (later Dorothy Rosenthal). Botkin died in Croton-on-Hudson, New York on July 30, 1975 (Rodgers and Hirsch 2).

3. The Collection and the Project

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Archives and Special Collections houses the Benjamin A. Botkin Collection of Applied American Folklore, which is where the

original “Progress” typescript can be found. The typescript has been transcribed, encoded, and reproduced via facsimiles with the permission of the UNL Archives and Special Collections. The Botkin collection is comprised of two major components: his personal library containing over 8,000 books and 423 linear feet of paper documents (Rodgers and Hirsch 13). The documents attest to Botkin’s extensive scholarly career. Alongside the numerous book and article manuscripts, his personal and business correspondences give extra insight into his work on folklore. The paper documents include field notes from his work at the Federal Writers’ Project, his personal research notes, manuscripts and drafts of his publications and speeches, and personal and business correspondence.

The correspondence spans a period from 1909 to 1976, past Botkin’s death. The collection contains thousands of letters donated by the Botkin family, and includes letters authored by various members of the Botkin family addressed to people other than Botkin (Botkin Collection). Botkin’s business correspondence includes letters to and from prominent individuals such as Woody Guthrie, Charles Seeger, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Pete Seeger, Norman Rockwell, Langston Hughes, Ira and George Gershwin, and Mari Sandoz.

The manuscript documents cover the majority of Botkin’s professional life, dating as far back as the 1920s and continuing to the year before his death. Manuscript files for his numerous published books contain draft notes, field notes, and often multiple draft revisions. The collection also contains manuscripts for a number of unpublished works, both books of folklore collections and academic articles. At least three of Botkin’s book

manuscripts contained in the collection have never been published, *People at Play* (c. 1964), *Negro Folklore* (c. 1965), and *Myths and Symbols* (c. 1968).

The Botkin Collection at UNL is the most comprehensive resource available to access Botkin's work and correspondence. The Library of Congress houses some letters from people who corresponded with Botkin, including the Gershwins, Woody Guthrie, and Alan Lomax, but does not possess any of Botkin's letters (Finding Aids). Similarly, the National Archives contains no material pertaining directly to Botkin (National Archives). Excerpts from select letters of Botkin's have been quoted in various articles and books. The unpublished manuscripts have even less representation in the public sphere. It would seem that none of the manuscripts that went unpublished during Botkin's lifetime have been edited and published. With the digital technologies now available, these materials can be made widely available to interested persons and scholars for further research and treatment.

The content of the UNL Botkin Collection is far reaching and expansive. While the current project is limited in scope, there is great potential for further work in digitizing and publishing the contents of the Botkin Collection. Certain selections from Botkin's correspondence have been microfilmed, but this can prove difficult to access. The majority of the unpublished book manuscripts come from work Botkin was doing during the height of the Civil Rights Movement during the early 1960s. While not all of this work deals directly with issues of social progress, it may prove interesting to scholars considering both the historical context and Botkin's political and scholarly ideas.

High quality digital facsimiles of the "Progress" essay have been created for this project and provided for reference alongside the encoded transcription. The essay has

been transcribed and encoded using the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) XML schema version P5. This digitization process focuses on the ease of usability and readability for users, creating the first widely accessible resource for a work of Botkin's that provides a unique and undiluted view into his political and philosophical viewpoints.

4. Editorial Policy

The editing of Botkin's "Progress" essay has been undertaken with primary consideration being given to the ease of readability and accurate representation of the typescript. Obvious spelling or typing mistakes have been corrected and marked up in the XML document. Original spellings have been suppressed from the XML output, so that the readable website version of the essay includes only the corrected spellings. Additions and deletions that Botkin made in the typescript have been marked up in the XML document, with only additions being displayed in the readable version. Additionally, there are two pages missing from the archived typescript, pages seven and nine, which have been noted in the XML document as gaps, and have been rendered in the readable version as "[missing page]."

5. Botkin's Folklore

As an academic, Botkin was a pioneer of new views on folklore scholarship that challenged many of his contemporaries. Botkin garnered a significant number of followers who drew inspiration from his work, but the dominant opinions in academia during his lifetime were against his work. Fellow folklorist Richard Dorson, one of Botkin's most vocal critics, denounced work like Botkin's, which he termed "fakelore" in 1950 (Jones). Dorson was committed to viewing the work of scholars as being purely investigative and preservative, he was reluctant to venture into any form of scholarly

activism. He did not view it as a responsibility of folklore scholars to employ their findings in any way “to give advice on how to make the world better, or happier, or freer” (Dorson 40). Additionally, Dorson was skeptical of applied folklore because of the history of abuse and misuse of folklore, such as “Nazi Germany’s exploitation of the Aryan myth;” and because of the potential for commercial exploitation he saw in packaging scholarship for mass consumption (Jones 10). One may wonder if Dorson was also partly motivated to criticize Botkin because of the pressure exerted upon various groups by federal agencies to ostracize members who supported socialist or communist activism.

Botkin’s approach to folklore emphasized its fluid nature, ever-changing with the people who create it and imbricated with their daily lives. The social environment in which participants create and consume folklore is continually shifting, and the common cultural narratives and customs in circulation are responsive to the milieu. Botkin is considered the father of “public folklore” or “applied folklore,” folklore that is done outside universities and colleges and is less concerned with taxonomizing and theorizing than with collecting, disseminating, and acting upon folklore. Botkin and like-minded folklorists believed that American folklore played a vital role in promoting a democratic culture by being grounded in shared experience and the transmission of that experience. In the forward to *A Treasury of American Folklore*, Botkin states:

in one respect it is necessary to distinguish between folklore as we find it and folklore as we believe it ought to be. Folklore as we find it perpetuates human ignorance, perversity, and depravity along with human wisdom and goodness. Historically we cannot deny or

condone this baser side of folklore—and yet we may understand and condemn it as we condemn other manifestations of human error.

Botkin's notion that folklore communicates and instills social values, traditions, and goals was derided by some of his peers at the time, but is widely accepted amongst folklorists today. Botkin believed that democracy is strengthened by valuing the diversity of voices that participate in it. Botkin's most vocal critic, Richard Dorson, strove to confine the roles and responsibilities of folklore scholars. Dorson's conservative view of folklore scholarship and his criticism of Botkin's work remained widely accepted amongst academics up until recently (Hirsch, "The 'Ben Botkin Bulldozer'" 57).

Botkin termed his theory "applied folklore" and described it as "folklore for understanding and creating understanding" (Jackson 3). While many of his academic peers considered the study of folklore to be concerned with preserving the past and bemoaned the modernization of customs, Botkin believed that folklore was part of a dynamic relationship between the past, the present, and the future. Botkin emphasized the idea that a proper consideration of folklore must take seriously the fact that both the folk and the lore are not static entities and should not be desired to be so. His radical views drew both favor and criticism. "Few folklorists in the past decade have had as many storms rage about them as [he]; his work has been both violently attacked and staunchly defended" (Stekert 335). Of his approach to folklore, Botkin said:

In a changing society with concomitant rapid growth and mixture of disciplines, a folklore study of socio-historical myths and symbols should help us to reassess old and new values and to understand the present in the light of the past and vice versa by providing a new approach to the positive or negative role of myth and

symbols in unifying or separating people and promoting social progress or reaction. (Jackson 5)

As Botkin further developed his approach to folklore, he began to turn away from the traditional study of rural people and traditions and looked instead towards urban inhabitants and laborers. Botkin's turn from rural to urban exemplifies his belief that folklore happens in the present and evolves with the folk. Goals of advancing society towards understanding, mutual appreciation, and co-existence were always combined with his approach to studying and presenting folklore. Botkin was not concerned with transcending difference but rather regarding it as a positive aspect of society. He "tried to formulate an approach to the study of American folklore that took into account the nation's different regions, races, and classes; showed the interrelationship between folk, popular, and high culture." Botkin looked towards his present time seeking some kind of unified American identity grounded in plurality. This kind of American identity stood in opposition to the ability of the dominant groups to maintain power, however. The established hierarchy of power depended upon the fragmentation of the folk. The dominant groups depended upon marking certain groups and individuals as Others and subordinating them; it sought to segregate the nation by delineating boundaries of race, class, and ethnicity (Hirsch).

Botkin believed instead that:

Our many folk cultures are not behind us at all but right under us. Below the surface of the dominant pattern are the popular life and fantasy of our cultural minorities and other nondominant groups—nondominant but not recessive, not static but dynamic and transitional, on their way up. (Hirsch 18)

He began conceiving his applied folklore approach early on in his career but it was not put into print until the early 1950s. It was during this time of heightened political and ideological tension that Botkin's remarkably populist and communal theory was introduced into academic thought.

Botkin laid out the framework for his approach to folklore in his 1953 article "Applied Folklore: Creating Understanding through Folklore." Remarking on the article, Jerrold Hirsch and Lawrence Rodgers write that

despite having earned his own [FBI] file, Botkin was intent on promoting just the kind of intercultural understanding at home and sympathy among nations that made him vulnerable to conservative paranoia. He remains committed to promoting applied folklore as a crucial means for creating a sense of community for a pluralistic society. (Rodgers and Hirsch 220)

In this article, Botkin describes a folklore practice that can be utilized to build an international community grounded in understanding differences and fostering mutual respect. In the object of his study—folklore—Botkin sees the potential that "folk material can be used for [the] development of international consciousness and the promotion of international understanding" (Botkin 221).

Botkin furthermore asserted that the academic practice of folklore should be interdisciplinary rather than self-contained. Botkin believed that the folklorist must consider lore alongside the historical and material contexts in which it was created, lest the studier of folklore impress an undue amount of their own subjectivity upon the lore. In this sense, "the folk-sayer—the folk genius as creator or transmitter—plays an all-important role." Botkin described his term folk-say as "what the folk have to say not only

for but about themselves, in their own way and in their own words” (Botkin 223). In this manner, Botkin was trying to establish a practice of folklore that was more egalitarian than other conservative folklorists at the time. Dorson and like-minded folklorists were effectively trying to consolidate their power and authority over the object of their study. Their camp asserted the idea of a “pure” folklore scholar, who studied folklore in itself.

Botkin’s perception of the goals and possibilities of applied folklore can be well summed up with his statement:

The ultimate aim of applied folklore is the restoration to American life of the sense of community—a sense of thinking, feeling, and acting along similar, though not the same, lines—that is in danger of being lost today. Thus applied folklore goes beyond cultural history to cultural strategy, to the end of creating a favorable environment for the liberation of our creative energies and the flourishing of the folk arts among other social, cooperative activities. (Botkin 224-5)

6. Botkin and the FBI

In the evening of January 26, 1954, FBI agents came to the door of 45 Lexington Avenue in Croton-on-Hudson, New York. Botkin, in his family residence, was “taken by surprise at a time when no other person was present” and questioned about allegations of his membership in the Communist Party. Botkin was described as having “exhibited courtesy to interviewing agents and assumed an attitude of cooperation,” and was firm but unspecific in his denials when questioned about whether he was aware one of his acquaintances was a known Party member, or whether he was himself involved in the Communist Party.

An FBI memo dated April 5, 1954, stated:

Botkin mentioned repeatedly that, at one time in his life, he believed he was a ‘free agent’ and could say or do as he pleased. He stated that recently he has realized that he does not live in a world of his own and that he must live within a community of neighbors and conform to the pattern of that community. He stated that it is for this reason that he has no desire to belong to any organization which could be considered subversive or to associate with any person whose interests are disloyal to this country.

Botkin's surveillance by the FBI certainly seems to have taken a toll on him both personally and professionally. Later in her life, his daughter Dorothy noted that the fear provoked by the surprise interview in 1954 seems to be the most plausible explanation for changes in his personality that she noted around that time. She remarked that he retreated into himself and abandoned a theoretical book on American myths and symbols that he was working on (Davis 14).

The abandonment of the *Myths and Symbols* book is rather remarkable. Botkin had been deeply passionate about his work up until the point of stopping work on this book. He considered this book to be a culmination of all his previous work, drawing upon it and helping to tie it together. In his letters to family members, he mentions a waning interest in finishing his magnum opus. “I try to balance work with leisure, but the work suffers for these and other reasons—July being what it is and my having too many irons in the fire resulting in their cooling off, if anything can cool off while we swelter, and while the cooling off cools ambition” (Botkin 1971). In the same letter, he mentions that his publisher, Macmillan, has been prodding him to finish work on the *Myths and*

Symbols book, so it was not for lack of publishing opportunity that this piece did not see fruition.

The informant mentioned in the FBI files stated that Botkin had “a great fear . . . that the stigma of Communism might attach to himself and his family . . . [and] that his only desire [was] to lead a quiet life removed from all local or national affairs having political significance.” This attitude marks a great departure from the previous inclinations that Botkin expressed up to this date in his long work with folklore. Earlier Botkin had poured himself into his work and was determined to draw out the political implications of his approach to studying and presenting folklore.

There are numerous relevant contexts for the political intimidation of Botkin and of the change it brought in his outlook. One key event occurred on June 19, 1953, when Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed after being found guilty of conspiring with the Soviet Union. While persecution of Communist Party members and sympathizers had been going on already, this drastic measure was surely imprinted on the nation’s consciousness as a moment that stood out amongst the tumultuous events of the time. The Rosenbergs were executed at Sing Sing prison in Ossining, New York, a city near Hudson-on-Croton, that Botkin mentions frequenting in his personal correspondence. Gertrude and he would “go for drives around [the] dam and Ossining area” (1954-08-21). Sing Sing Prison was under 40 miles from Botkin’s home on 45 Lexington Avenue, just about an hour drive away.

There is little doubt that Botkin was stirred by the events of the Rosenbergs’ trial and execution. The Botkins had much in common with the Rosenbergs: both were Jewish families living in New York, both with liberal politics. Botkin’s politics toed the line

between his avowed democratic socialism and classical Communism. His social circles contained known Communist Party members and he was accused of being a member of different political groups considered by the American government to be sympathetic to Communism. Groups that were pro-labor, anti-racism, anti-fascism, and anti-war were listed among those associated with the Communist Party (Davis 6). Additionally, Botkin was good friends with Charles and Ruth Seeger, and the Botkin and Seeger families spent much time together (Rosenthal and Botkin). Charles Seeger's son, Pete Seeger, was a notable folk singer and political activist who gained the attention of the FBI for his public support of leftist ideology (Folk Singers). It would be surprising if the accounts of the execution of the Rosenberg couple did not resonate deeply with Botkin and make him reflect on his life and that of his own wife. Newspapers were filled with accounts at the same time gruesome and sentimental of Julius' trip to the electric chair and Ethel's botched execution—the extra shocks required and the smoke that rose from her corpse. One reporter wrote, “she did not know as she sat there that her husband already was dead” (Woliston 1953). Botkin never explicitly mentions the Rosenbergs around the time of their death in his letters to friends and family, but a mention of their execution does appear in a short note in one of his personal journals.

7. “Progress” Authorship and Origin

Within the UNL archives, the typescript for the “Progress” essay appears alongside various documents for a treasury that Botkin was working on titled *Negro Folklore*. Although the different documents are grouped together in the same box, it is unclear that there is any connection between them, other than their shared focus on black Americans. The *Negro Folklore* typescript appears to be something that Botkin was

working on around 1967-68, and he was perhaps gathering material for the book much earlier than this work on the manuscript. From his notes and correspondence, it appears that Botkin was working on this treasury with fellow folklorist Sterling Brown.

The nature of “Progress” forces one to temper any claim of absolute certainty of authorship. The essay is typewritten, so a comparison with Botkin’s handwriting cannot provide evidence, and it is also unsigned, including simply a header title. However, the formatting of the document, and its physical qualities, do appear similar to other documents produced by Botkin. Nearly all of his typewritten manuscripts, as well as his transcriptions of correspondence, were typed on onionskin paper like that of the essay. The pages of the essay are numbered in the upper-right corner, consistent with his other manuscripts. Typing mistakes are overwritten on, rather than erased, which is how Botkin handled mistakes in his other typewritten documents. Additionally, the fact that Botkin was working on a project with a fellow folklorist concerning black Americans at presumably the same time presents the possibility that the essay could have been co-authored, or even authored by Sterling Brown and sent to Botkin for proofing and comments. These possibilities are rather unlikely, but must be acknowledged.

The evidence that the “Progress” manuscript is authored by Botkin outweighs the evidence that it is not. Botkin was a meticulous collector, a quality that is displayed in the extensive collection of his work available at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. It would be uncharacteristic for him to keep another scholar’s work mixed in with his own without demarcating it somehow. Further, even though the manuscript is typewritten there are handwritten notes on page 10 that appear very similar to Botkin’s characteristic handwriting. The manuscript also is in a voice marked with wit and hints of self-

deprecatory humor that is characteristic of Botkin's less formal writing—such as that present in his correspondence with friends and family. There are also several passages of the essay that seem to imply that the author is white and not African-American, which would rule out Sterling Brown as a possible author.

Based on various events that Botkin mentions in the essay the date of its drafting can be concluded to be somewhere between June 1958 and early January 1959. On page three, he cites a quotation from May of 1958, the following page cites the *Scientific American* issue from June 1958. Page sixteen mentions voting statistics from 1958. The following page gives the best hint of the upper bounds for the date of the essay: Botkin mentions Alaska and Hawaii have not received statehood yet. Alaska received statehood on January 3 of 1959, before Hawaii. As such, the essay must have been drafted between June 1958 and January 3, 1959.

8. “Progress”

Benjamin Botkin's prescient essay “Progress: Negroes and Everybody, From Folk Tale to Science Fiction” is situated in an academic line of inquiry that started to gain traction over a decade after his writing the piece. Botkin's primary line of argument is an attack on the notion that African Americans achieved equal status and treatment with the passage of Civil Rights era legislation. He acknowledges the great advances that African Americans have fought for and gained in terms of legal status—beginning with Emancipation and continuing to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965—but his focus is turned towards the societal and structural inequalities facing African Americans that are still pervasive to this day. Botkin argues that it is these inequalities and injustices that are actually most harmful, and that they

often go unnoticed. The essay reveals that some of Botkin's thoughts on this subject aligned with thinking that would become dominant in academic circles only decades later. In particular, he expresses ideas that fall under Derrick Bell's theory of interest convergence and also Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's theorization of the Long Civil Rights Movement.

In a 2005 article, Hall argued for a reframing of the Civil Rights Movement. She begins by outlining the dominant narrative concerning the Civil Rights Movement. This narrative contends that the movement began in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education* case and came to a climax with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Hall argues that the goals and activities of civil rights supporters can be traced farther back to the liberal environment of the 1930s, and extends into the present day. This view of the movement stands in opposition to the previously dominant view of the Civil Rights Era as a neatly contained period that established goals and achieved those goals with the passage of the 1964 and 1965 bills.

Following the passage of these bills, the conservative right underwent a transformation; they discarded the traditional notion of racism and instead adopted the idea of color-blindness—“if stark group inequalities persisted, black attitudes, behavior, and family structures were to blame” (Hall 1237). Conservatives accepted that legal structures were to blame for racial inequality before the Civil Rights Movement, but after black Americans gained legal legitimacy the blame for any further inequality was shifted onto the individuals subjected to societal oppression. This new conservative attitude believed the goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to address individual wrongdoings, interpersonal discrimination and intolerance, rather than to work against the systemic

issues of oppression and injustice. These “narratives spun by the new conservatives maintain a strong hold on the public imagination, in part because they have been repeated so often and broadcast so widely, and in part because they avoid uncomfortable questions about the relationship between cumulative white advantage and present social ills” (Hall 1262).

Botkin displays a similar notion in noting that “no progress is in a straight line, gradual, advancing evenly on all fronts.” He also denies the notion that the legislation of the 1960s fully realized the goals of the civil rights activists, even though this was a fairly popular opinion amongst the general public. He writes, “nearly everyone seems to assume, vaguely, that American Negroes have been advancing, gradually, through nearly a century since Emancipation, and that today their progress is rapid. But these beliefs . . . just ain't so. Negro progress has not been gradual and today is not rapid.” This may seem unexpected, as Botkin is writing this at a time when leftist activism was surging on an international scale (Jobs). However, one can imagine that his personal experiences of the abilities available to the dominant powers may have moderated his confidence in resistance activism.

Furthermore, Botkin’s focus in his essay is not on the legal rights granted to black Americans, but rather on the social and systemic inequalities that still persist. He lists numerous examples from popular culture and the media that continue to perpetuate negative stereotypes towards black Americans, and writes that they “very seldom, still, appear before the national eye where it counts—in the most popular arts like advertising, television, movies, comics, and magazine fiction—except as clowns or servants.” Botkin states this has a multifaceted effect on the American population. Firstly, it perpetuates

those negative stereotypes, it conditions other Americans to mock, ridicule, and distrust black Americans. Secondly, it dehumanizes and demoralizes black Americans, standing in the way of Botkin's notion of human progress—which “may be defined as movement to social states in which more people have more courage and power of all kinds.”

His conception of progress is aligned with Hall's as well. Botkin does not regard progress as the “idea” of equality or legal legitimacy: he is aware that legality does not always translate to reality. He is concerned with the systems and beliefs in place that produce inequality, things that are extralegal. These are practices and beliefs like those that Botkin points to in his essay when he writes of *The Chessmen of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs, in which a devoted slave is offered her freedom only to turn it down because she is contented and happy with her master.

Derrick Bell pioneered a theory regarding racial progress that has been extremely influential among critical race theory scholars. Bell put forth his theory of interest convergence in 1980, twelve years after Botkin's “Progress” essay. Bell argues that the advances achieved by minorities have occurred not solely because of any altruistic or moral epiphanies, but rather in large part because those advancements coincided with the self-interests of the dominant classes. He notes that arguments in favor of desegregation put forward by both the NAACP and the federal government remarked upon how the decision would “provide immediate credibility to America's struggle with communist countries to win the hearts and minds of emerging third world peoples” (Bell 524). To these third world countries, largely constituted of people of color, the mistreatment of black Americans did not make American democracy look any more appealing. It was the

opportunity to advance the public image of US democracy that appealed to elite white legislators.

The interest convergence view of the Civil Rights Movement was reinforced and expanded upon by Mary L. Dudziak in her book *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Dudziak goes to great lengths tracing the evidence that civil rights advances were dependent upon interest convergence through her detailed examination of numerous federal documents, press releases, and other first-hand sources. Richard Delgado takes this line of thought even further by asserting that there was an implicit deal struck between America's elite policy makers and black Americans. Through coercion and violence, the American government made it evident that civil rights advocates must go along with the American agenda and disavow socialism and communism (Delgado 386). Delgado gives as one example the entertainer Josephine Baker, who used the platform of her international fame to speak out against American racism. Baker was targeted by the U.S. Information Agency and State Department, which "took steps to discredit her and persuade local promoters to cancel her appearances . . . [which] virtually destroyed her career" (Delgado 378). The consequences of stepping out of line with this implicit deal were made clearer by the government's response to black radicals in the late sixties. When Black Panther Party members "began reading and teaching Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, Marx, Mao, and Lenin, this confirmed the government's belief that the Party had to be stopped" (381). The Black Panther Party was subjected to a campaign of defamation in the media and physical raids resulting in numerous arrests and the deaths of Party members Fred Hampton and Mark Clark (382).

If taking away your livelihood is not persuasive enough, the government is contented to take away your life.

Botkin expresses sentiments similar to Derrick Bell's in the "Progress" essay. He acknowledges the impact that international relations and Cold War politics must have had on the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, writing that:

In a cold-war world where the majority of mankind, which is dark of skin, is raising considerable hell, there are strong impulses both to accept and reject American Negroes. World politics must have influenced the Supreme Court, if only subconsciously, when it decided in 1953 that white and colored children ought to go to school together.

This kind of cautious and cynical thinking is present throughout "Progress," but is intertwined with Botkin's optimistic idealism. His essay reads as though he is trying to come to terms with the competing positions of his ideals and the facts of the world. He is at one moment praising the great potential of humanity and the next moment bemoaning the quagmire of racism and inequality that is still so deeply ingrained in us.

This internal struggle is apparent in the rather odd paragraph that Botkin concludes his essay with. He at first points to the inherent potential that humanity's recent technological advances can afford the world, continuing his previous line of thought that "now, today, for the very first time in history we have the power . . . to abolish hunger and ignorance." He declares in his closing paragraph that "a new and higher Renaissance is almost within our grasp. Mankind is on the brink of becoming human." Botkin does not end on this optimistic point, though. The last sentences of the essay take an ironic turn with an imagined depiction of a utopic theater, in which, after the show, audience members "salivate happily in the dark, holding hands" as they eat the

food presented to them in abundance and gratis. It is here that Botkin seems to be problematizing his own idealistic hopes for humanity. He evokes a sense of contentment and compassion that may only be attainable in a possible afterlife, as the theatergoers revel in their company and sustenance to the music of “angels’ harps.”

We are left wondering if Botkin really believes in his sarcastic criticism of Arnold J. Toynbee’s cyclical view of history in the preceding pages. Toynbee, as Botkin puts it, believes “we, poor humanity, may go round and round or up and down but for one reason or another, nowhere. We do not progress . . . ‘the human condition’ . . . was always with us and always will be . . . things were always the same. We were and are licked.” It is unclear what statements we should take at face-value. Should we believe Botkin’s sarcastic comments towards the cynical views of the human condition as static and unchanging are representative of his ideas, or should we instead look at his earnest pleas for building a healthy and cooperative world community? If the entire context is taken into account, one may propose that the essay is an expression of Botkin’s lament for the impotence of his political hopes, a recognition that his agenda does not fit the paradigm of his time, and that it can be met with violent retaliation.

9. Conclusion

The publication of Botkin’s “Progress” essay is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it can prove interesting to contemporary folklore scholars as a look into a facet of Botkin’s writing that is very different from much of his published work. The essay provides readers with insight into Botkin’s ideas about race, politics, and humanity during the Civil Rights Movement era, stated in a frank manner. As author of “the most popular book ever published on American folklore,” this kind of insight can be valuable

to future scholars who look to Botkin and folklorists like him in their research (America's Folklorist 57). Secondly, the essay is an example of the dissenting beliefs concerning civil rights and equality that were often unheard during this period. Many ideas reflected in Botkin's essay have only recently become generally accepted among scholars. Further identifying the lineage of this line of thought can serve to legitimize it in our time, while it also strengthens Botkin's reputation as an insightful and diligent researcher. Finally, "Progress" and the context surrounding it can serve as a reminder for contemporary progressive activists. Botkin's disillusionment in democratic political activity is perhaps more relevant now than ever, as we are faced with a number of different global crises and a popular sentiment of nearly willful ignorance towards them. This essay can stand as a reminder of the progress that has been made since its writing, and also a warning to hold on to our values and goals tenaciously and vigilantly.

During the McCarthy era, vague and broad accusations of communist sympathy were passed upon scholars with even the slightest possibility of left-leaning scholarship. The case of Owen Lattimore, a scholar of China and central Asia, provides a particularly drastic example of how government McCarthyists tried to establish convictions through oblique reasoning. Lattimore was charged with perjury "for denying that his writings followed the Soviet line" (Schrecker 2004, 1058). Parallel to contemporary times, "a similar process is taking place today as the Bush administration, lacking evidence of terrorism, relies on the selective enforcement of immigration regulations or else seeks to detain people as 'material witnesses'" (1059). In the last year, we have seen a turn where vague warnings of terrorism have been used to enact policy like Donald Trump's travel ban instituted on a number of predominantly Muslim countries; this in spite of the fact

that “since the US Refugee Act of 1980 was established, no refugee has been implicated in a major fatal terrorist attack in the USA” (Spiegel). The travel ban has been criticized as incredibly detrimental to international collaboration in scholarship and international student populations.

Benjamin Botkin’s experience with government surveillance and intimidation is relevant to the post-9/11 world we live in. Whereas Botkin’s era was concerned with the fear of communism, this has been supplanted in our time by the spectre of terrorism. The past must be examined if we are to learn from our mistakes and not risk repeating them. We can continue Botkin’s mission of understanding “the present in the light of the past and vice versa” (Jackson 5). In the past, there lies the fact that thousands of US citizens faced persecution for their political views and liberal voices were stifled by conservatives and liberals alike in fear of McCarthyist accusations. “Today, as we confront the post-9/11 assault on individual rights, it is clear that what happened in the 1940s and 1950s was no aberration but the all too common reaction of a nation that seeks to protect itself by turning against its supposed enemies at home” (Schrecker 2004, 1042). A better understanding of stories like Botkin’s can help us recognize and work against forces that suppress movement towards solidarity and community.

Works Cited

- Bell, Jr., Derrick A. "BROWN V. BOARD of EDUCATION and the INTEREST-CONVERGENCE DILEMMA." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 93, no. 3, Jan. 1980, p. 518.
- Benjamin A. Botkin Collection of Applied American Folklore (MS 066). Archives & Special Collections, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries.
- Botkin, Benjamin Albert. *A Treasury of American folklore*. New York: Wings, 1993. Print.
- Botkin, Benjamin. "Applied Folklore: Creating Understanding through Folklore." *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 17 (September 1953). Rpt in Rodgers, Lawrence R., and Jerrold Hirsch. *America's folklorist: B.A. Botkin and American culture*. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 2010. Print.
- Botkin, Benjamin. "Progress: Negroes and Everybody, From Folk Tale to Science Fiction." Box 218. Folder 1. Benjamin A. Botkin Collection of Applied American Folklore (MS 066). Archives & Special Collections, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries.
- Botkin, Benjamin. Letter. July 4, 1971. Box 40, Folder 16. Benjamin A. Botkin Collection of Applied American Folklore (MS 066). Archives & Special Collections, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries.
- Davis, S. G. "Ben Botkin's FBI File." *Journal of American Folklore* 123.487 (2010): 3-30.
- Dudziak, Mary L. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. New ed. Princeton, N.J.; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2011. Print.

Finding Aids. Library of Congress, n.d. Web.

“Folk Singers, Social Reform, and the Red Scare.” *Library of Congress*, n.d. Web.

Goldstein, Phyllis, et al. *A Convenient Hatred*. Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012. Print.

Guide to Federal Records. National Archives, n.d. Web.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past.” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 4, 2005, pp. 1233–1263.

Henry Botkin. Child’s Gallery, n.d. Web.

Hirsch, Jerrold. “The ‘Ben Botkin Bulldozer.’” in ed. Rodgers, Lawrence R., and Jerrold Hirsch. *America's folklorist: B.A. Botkin and American Culture*. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 2010. Print.

Jones, Michael Owen, and American Council of Learned Societies. *Putting Folklore to Use*. Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1994. Print. Publications of the American Folklore Society, New Series.

Kyrtatas, Dimitris J. "Slavery as Progress: Pagan and Christian Views of Slavery as Moral Training." *International Sociology* 10.2: 219-34. Print.

Richard M. Dorson, “Applied Folklore,” in Dick Sweterlitsch, ed. *Papers on Applied Folklore* (Bloomington: Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series, no. 8, 1971), 40.

Rodgers, Lawrence R., and Jerrold Hirsch. *America's folklorist: B.A. Botkin and American Culture*. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 2010. Print.

Schrecker, Ellen. "Anxious in Academe: Higher Education in the World of Bush and Cheney." *Radical Teacher*. 77 (a): 7-11. Print.

---. "McCarthyism: Political Repression and the Fear of Communism." *Social Research* 71.4 (b): 1041-86. Print.

Spiegel, Paul and Leonard Rubenstein. "The Academic Case for Repealing Trump's Refugee and Travel Ban." *Lancet*, vol. 389, no. 10070, 18 Feb. 2017, p. 679.

Williams, Bernard Arthur Owen. *Shame and Necessity*. 57 Vol. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. Print. Sather Classical Lectures.

Woliston, Jack. "Rosenbergs go silently to electric chair." UPI Archives, 20 June 1953. Web.

Progress: Negroes and Everybody, From Folk Tale to Science Fiction

by Benjamin A. Botkin

A few weeks ago I rashly used the word "Progress" in talking about nuclear energy to a friend who is considered bright and well-informed, not only by himself but by other men and women of distinction.

"Progress? Do not make me laugh," he said. "Toward what?" he asked. "Toward conformity? Anxiety? Ulcers?"

"You take a short view. Such hopeless cynicism—"

"Nothing I know of says we can't 'progress' to tyranny, to barbarism, to extinction of life on this planet."

"But nuclear war is NOT inevitable. Science makes it possible—"

"Oh you're an optimist," he said, as if that should shut anyone's mouth. "I can't see that any of us are getting anywhere except for the Negroes."

My friend's view is probably typical—of thoughtful Americans today. Few retain a solid Calvinist belief in the general progress of mankind, in the goodness of Providence. Yet nearly everyone seems to assume, vaguely, that American Negroes have been advancing, gradually, through nearly a century since Emancipation, and that today their progress is rapid. But these beliefs, as we amateurs of folklore like to say, just ain't so. Negro progress has not been gradual and today is not rapid. Yet it is real, and there is great hope, not for Negroes alone but for them along with all Americans and all humanity.

Most Negroes of course still live in the South—of the United States. White Southerners often tell Northerners not to interfere while the South solves its over-riding Problem in its own way. Northerners reply that they would gladly abstain if they did not have a personal interest in the South. For one thing, it is a "backward" region and something of a millstone hung on the nation's neck. For another reason, a Southern minority sends its representatives to Congress and they make the laws under which Northerners, too, must live. We Northerners have a right to intervene, and we do.

So it is with the whole world. The United States could, and sometimes does, ask the World to let us take care of our "Negro Problem" in our own time and our own way. But the World is in a hurry. It seems to think that it has an interest in the matter. And so long as we export freedom, democracy, arms, and dollars, the world does have an interest.¹ The status and progress of American Negroes is a well-known major factor in world politics.

So the nation swarms with experts on the subject. I would accept their judgments except that they disagree so violently. In such a circumstance, we non-experts can speak, and may even make sense.² I have begun to explore this vast, cloudy, complex subject from some odd angles of view—looking at folklore and the popular arts, wondering what has happened to Negroes and to the national idea of them as they and we all have moved from the country to the city.³ Perhaps this is just as valid as statistics.

Underlying the whole matter is History. There is the great process of industrialization and urbanization. This is primary, however one may hate "-izations." The world has long been moving from the country to the city, and so have Americans—Negroes more slowly. Millions of colored Americans move from cabins in the pines to

tenements in Harlem, from slums in rural Alabama to slums in Birmingham and Montgomery. Rather than tell folk tales about the relations of white and colored men, they look at and listen to Jack Benny and Rochester. In cities Bre'r Rabbit does not outwit the Fox but Jackie Robinson and many successors play crafty big league ball. In rural areas John Henry still competes with steam power in drilling holes in rock for dynamite charges, but in the world's capitals Ralph Bunche works for the United Nations and wins a Nobel Prize. Much is gained through the prestige of a few artists in the theater, music, sports and politics. Much is lost by millions of Negro folk artists as they begin to buy art in the cities rather than make it themselves.

Going to the city, Negroes may move two steps forward and one step back as artists and as citizens—or perhaps it is one step forward and two steps back. A. Philip Randolph, the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, said in May of 1958 that "The Negro today is not only NOT winning his civil rights, but the South is pressing, if not winning, the war against the Negro's fight for freedom." Negroes very seldom, still, appear before the national eye where it counts—in the most popular arts like advertising, television, movies, comics, and magazine fiction—except as clowns or servants. For many, still, a dark face on a screen is a signal for laughter, much as a bell signals salivation to a Pavlovian dog. We are "conditioned."

To be human is, among other things, to have respect—more important than tolerance and, perhaps, more necessary than love. Once upon a time Caesar's Italian GI's thought British chieftains less than human. William's Norman troops looked down on Harold's Saxons. Redcoated Saxons in America and India have had little respect for colonials, white-skinned or dark. Though Kipling said that the water-boy, Gunga Din,

was a better man, he didn't really mean it: he meant that Din was a loyal servant, a faithful dog. American Negroes have not made dramatic progress so long as "Amos and Andy" ride the air waves, a great musician like Louis Armstrong still "clowns," and we still have Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour and Uncle Ben Rice. Of course, Aunt Caroline Rice is now just Carolina Rice, but is this victory?

Progress is an idea and, I think, a fact, but it is a tricky one, needing a great deal of thinking about. Further, Americans, white and black, must think a great deal, painful and unaccustomed as this exercise may be, if they are to progress in the near future rather than regress. The general prospect is admittedly bleak. Nearly everyone who says anything says that this is an age of conformity. This is not just an idea but a fact, tested well enough by studies such as those made by Remmers and Radler of Purdue University on "Teenage Attitudes." (See, if you must, the *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* for June, 1958.) There is obviously a national—worse, a youthful—reversal of American tradition in regard to freedoms of thought and expression. In essence this must be Regress. Conformity to powerful or official ideas surely does not come from our liking others more and wishing to think like them but from fearing and hating others. We are not more socialized but more frightened. And here Progress may be defined as movement to social states in which more people have more courage and power of all kinds.

Still and yet, Progress has always been uneven and contradictory in its movement. Ancient slavery, horrible as it was, made possible human advance beyond tribal and peasant existence. Could slavery ever, anywhere, be progressive? Of course it was. The tribesman was confined to hunting, fishing, and the tribeswoman to some modest scratching at the soil. There were few specialists except for priests, miners, and

blacksmiths. Humanity advanced only when some men, seated comfortably on the backs of slaves, became philosophers, artists, scientists, technicians, administrators. Slave sweat was, oddly, a powder that sent Plato and Aristotle rocketing into stratospheres of thought. And then there was Regress. The glory that was Greece did decline into the mere grandeur that was Rome: as every schoolboy, or competent classicist, knows, there was a decline in the arts, in science, in thinking in general.

But the case was different with belated slavery in the United States—historically outmoded. This was Regress. Not that it lacked able defenders then and even now. There was something to the slave owners' argument that wage slavery was not necessarily a happier state than chattel slavery. There were country joys and city sorrows then, too. Then as ever in history there was a conflict of two "rights" and two "wrongs"—then paternalism against freedom, bondage against exploitation and insecurity.

Today, amid the politicking that goes on in the "cold war" between capitalism and socialism, we have a favorable reappraisal not only of "the robber barons" who founded economic monopoly, but of the Old South and slavery. And it is not so easy to prove that the slave (who had work, cabin, food, some laughter and singing) was so much worse off than the Harlemiter who now has no job, crowded living quarters, high rents, high prices, and rats.⁴ In the world at large the idea of progress is scant comfort to the millions, perhaps to a majority of humanity, who must bend and scratch for a bare living. In a long view the growth of population is a measure of Progress: it means greater human control of Nature. (For this we may look at the opening pages of Reisman's *THE LONELY CROWD* and V. Gordon Childe's *MAN MAKES HIMSELF*.) Yet in great India, while the population multiplied under British rule, the average family landholding declined

from about four acres to less than one. And Gunnar Myrdal reports from United Nations statistics that today the backward lands are getting poorer as the rich get richer.

I am convinced, though this sounds like bad modern poetry, that American Negroes are losing as they win and winning as they lose. In the long view Progress is entirely real. Now, today, for the very first time in history we have the power, even without nuclear energy, to abolish hunger and ignorance. Yet in this same long view, Progress is not gradual or automatic: Regress is just as real. Those who today advise American Negroes and their friends to go slow must be ignorant of the fact that no progress is in a straight line, gradual, advancing evenly on all fronts.

The basic difficulty must be that "One man's Progress is another man's Poison." This, as a demi-scientist, I would wish to be known henceforth as Ames' Law,⁵ more profound and far-reaching than Parkinson's Law, great as it is, of the multiplying inefficiency of corporate bureaucracy. In South Africa, Negro progress is poison to the Boers. In South United States, Negro progress is poison to the ruling whites. In Anglo-American history, William the Norman was poison to Harold the Saxon, John Ball to John of Gaunt, Oliver Cromwell to Charles II, George Washington to George of Hanover, Jefferson to Hamilton, and now the Reverend Luther King to Senator Eastland. There are, actually, laws in [missing page]

But today the idea of Progress is out of fashion. It has declined and fallen. It has been a sun setting in the West. Ancient cyclical theory has been revived in Spengler and Toynbee,⁶ for big examples, who say that we, poor humanity, may go round and round or up and down but for one reason or another, nowhere. We do not progress. Nor has the medieval idea of a fixed order been scorned in all these recent years since Henry Adams

rejected the Dynamo at the Saint Louis Exposition. He chose the Virgin instead, and regretted most change since the twelfth century.⁷

Well, Toynbee is at least classical. Adams, and certain bevvies or hordes following T. S. Eliot, have regretted change; have preferred the static feudal deal, or gismo. They blow it very cool. We are more feudal, with our chief intellectual catchwords being "the human predicament" or "the human condition"—which clearly imply that no change ever has been or will be. THE human whatever-it-is was always with us and always will be. In short, history was not. Things were always the same. We were and are licked. Tough stuff, men, but keep a stiff upper lip. No Eton, Harrow, Groton, or Hotchkiss boy should succumb.⁸ We should die it through, keeping the flags flying as the North American continent sinks into the seas. Heigh-ho, Sir Mordred. Pegasus—away!

In modern chaos—which is really the order demanded by colonials wishing to be nations—one has a nostalgia for medieval order and caste. This would be more comfortable. The Renaissance was too bouncy. It didn't exist, either. Toynbee and Crane Brinton say, after Spengler, that history goes in circles and spirals, that revolutions follow monotonous patterns. Change only seems to be change. As for the most massive study of American Negroes, Gunnar Myrdal's AN AMERICAN DILEMMA implies, by its very title, that whatever can be done will be wrong. It hopes for Progress, but the tone is doubtful. A dilemma has two horns [missing page]

In spite of the supposed or real dangers of being too scientific, too bureaucratic and state-ridden, too materialistic, too dependent on machines, we will yet make the rude wilderness of the world into a garden, the jungles within ourselves into farms.

Always till now, Nature, accident, blind history were stronger. Now we are stronger. We have the knowledge, the tools, the sources of energy for most people to be human. Now it is possible that all can eat, read, be learned, enjoy the arts, themselves be artists in music, dancing, sports, cooking, dressing, gardening, loving—in all, all the art of living.

Just now, except in gay and happy advertisements, it is hard to glimpse this possible, even inevitable Utopia where life will be not only comfortable and athletic but infinitely creative and adventurous—artistic—not mechanical, routinized, bureaucratic. Least of all is it easy to see a Golden Age for American Negroes, nor can anyone expect to move toward it easily, gradually, automatically.

Nor has there been anything regular or gradual about history so far, though many otherwise informed persons think there was. The usual picture is something like this: the slaves were freed; then a horde of Carpetbaggers encouraged them to be greedy, drunken legislators and chase white women; then the Ku Klux Klan, which wasn't a bad thing THEN, put a stop to this nonsense, for the Negroes weren't ready for self-rule (colonial or backward peoples are never quite ready); and so the Negroes were put in their place, segregated, and lost the vote; but ever since, gradually, we have been giving them education, rights, privileges, with all deliberate speed, and some day all will be "jake," that is, free and equal and democratic.

What actually happened was slightly different. Emancipation was a great advance and a joyous fruitful thing even though it brought bitter hardship to the majority who did not get forty acres and a mule. (Some DID get land from great plantations divided up under the sway and empery of Union rifles aimed by black hands as well as white.) In the

Reconstruction the unscrupulous carpetbaggers, the sly scalawags, and illiterate black field hands in Southern legislatures passed the most progressive laws for schools, roads, and other public improvements that the South had ever seen. Volunteer school teachers, mostly women, black and white, and not at all self-seeking, came from the North and the South eagerly began to learn to read and write. There had not been public schools for white children either, and adults thronged to learn too. There was a new and very real democracy, or opportunity. For the first time, and suddenly, Negroes voted, went to school, became legislators, policemen, firemen, aldermen, Congressmen, ambassadors. And most of the white South accepted all this. They had, as W. J. Cash points out in *THE MIND OF THE SOUTH*, felt guilty all along. They knew slavery was bad—that is, false. No doubt they felt relieved. A minority had lost its property—in human beings. The majority had found their souls. What doth it profit a man to lose slaves and gain his own soul? It profiteth him plenty.

The Ku Klux Klan did not change all this at once. It did not become very effective till ten and twenty years after the Civil War. And even then the Populist movement could revitalize Southern democracy, and in it whites and Negroes were allied. It is easy to forget that the South has more than once been the stronghold of liberalism, despite slavery, and may be so again. Before 1830 about eighty percent of all abolitionist societies were there. After the Civil War, decades passed before the "policies of proscription, segregation, and disenfranchisement that are often described as the immutable 'folkways' of the South,"⁹ took the shape that we are familiar with today. So C. Vann Woodward pointed out most authoritatively in *THE STRANGE CAREER OF JIM CROW*. He noted that the effort to justify these policies as a response to the

Reconstruction "is embarrassed by the fact that they did not originate in these times. And the belief that they are immutable and unchangeable is not supported by history." (P. 47)

It may be that History, or change, does actually exist, and can create emotions, even "instincts," concerning race. What may not exist, or rarely, is "objective" historians.

Gunnar Myrdal says from his middle-of-the road, Scandinavian, yet impeachable position, says that only a few white historians have given an account of the Reconstruction that "corresponds with the facts." (II, 1315) The question always is: "Whose theory and whose facts grinding whose axe?"

How the system of Jim Crow, or full segregation, was finally hardened and imposed in the Nineties of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth century, was well described by a little-known but distinguished Negro novelist. He told how legal maneuvers and illegal violence at last triumphed in North Carolina, in Wilmington especially. But the United States did not care to read of this. Even William Dean Howells, who had welcomed Chesnut to the pages of THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, found this novel too bitter.¹⁰ The America of Manifest Destiny and a rough-riding, big-stick Roosevelt preferred the anti-Negro fictions of the Reverend Thomas Dixon. He it was who wrote THE CLANSMAN, later made into Griffith's famous movie, THE BIRTH OF A NATION. This, though admittedly propaganda for the Klan, is famous and Art while Chesnut's novel is forgotten.

Here are some curious phenomena in the career of the popular arts. Propaganda is just pure hell on democratic, even radical, art. It spoils them. Yet propaganda for the Klan and against the Reconstruction and for rule by whites does not spoil the art of THE BIRTH OF A NATION. Some say, especially Southerners of station, that propaganda

spoils John Steinbeck's *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*, but somehow anti-Semitism does not spoil the art of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot.¹¹ How can this be? Today in the Fifties of the Twentieth Century there has been a fantastic boom in books about the Civil War, and booksellers have said, not altogether facetiously, that there are more Rebels in New York City than in the whole South. A comic strip called "Johnny Reb and Billy Yank," featured in the northern and Republican New York *HERALD TRIBUNE*, which always gave the rebel lad featured billing, has dropped poor Yankee Billy from the title.

An amateur of the popular and folk arts may hazard a guess. In a cold-war world where the majority of mankind, which is dark of skin, is raising considerable hell, there are strong impulses both to accept and reject American Negroes. World politics must have influenced the Supreme Court, if only subconsciously, when it decided in 1953 that white and colored children ought to go to school together. The nation, meaning us, was undecided—even ambivalent. In the election campaign of 1956 both the Republican and Democratic candidates for President straddled the issue. Mr. Eisenhower, the incumbent, criticized extremists—the extremist Negro children who wished to go to better schools and the extremist whites who wished them not to do so. The Supreme Court had also straddled like mugwumps (with their mugs on one side of the fence and their "wumps" on the other) by recommending that desegregation proceed "with all deliberate speed." This of course means slow progress or fast delay.

The speed has certainly been deliberate enough. By 1968 770 school districts were desegregated but over 2,000 were not. Less than 400,000 Negro students were in "integrated situations" four years after the Court decision while some two million were not. In seven Deep South states nothing had happened. At this rate, with growing

numbers entering school each year, the total of Jim-Crowed children may well be increasing rather than declining, the birthrate cancelling out the gains.

Even in the more "advanced" border or Upper South states, desegregation has often been of only a token nature. The annual report of 1957 of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People notes that North Carolina began its desegregation with all of twelve Negro students admitted to previously all-white schools in three communities. While Nashville, Tennessee, beginning late and deliberately with the first grade, enrolled eleven colored tots in five schools. One hundred and twenty-six were eligible, nineteen sought admission but eight withdrew. Where there is a will, there is not always a way. Even after the law has shuffled forward with slow, majestic pace, the extra-legal barriers and dangers are many.

It is often said, and not only in the South, that the pace must be slowed to the readiness of the white South for change, and there is reliance upon Sumner's theory that laws cannot change the folkways and institutions of a people. But as G. Franklin Edwards of Howard University pointed out, reviewing Woodward's book on JIM CROW (THE MIDWEST JOURNAL, Spring-Fall 1956), this theory "ignores completely the efficient use of legislative techniques by Southerners to fashion a change in the status of the Negro and to restructure attitudes toward him."

Laws were used to establish segregation, rapidly, around the turn of the century. They can now disestablish it where there is the will in those who have power. The Deep South is not hesitating at all to legislate in reinforcement of segregation, and the Southern states have passed a hundred laws for this purpose, quite aside from a flood of local ordinances directed chiefly against the NAACP. It may be repeated that rigid and full-

blown segregation is not at all an old Southern tradition, not a part of immutable folkways, but something created little more than fifty years ago by laws, threats, and violence. By the same means today this recent, newfangled folkway is being maintained.

Of course there are very old Southern traditions and folkways, but not all of them are good and all of them are subject to change. The Old South was famed for chivalry. But as Virginius Dabney once wrote,¹² "So chivalrous, indeed, was the ante-bellum South that its women were granted scarcely any rights at all," and Dolly Madison, according to Harriet Martineau,¹³ called the Southern wife "the chief slave of the harem." Gracious living and good manners are a fine old Souther tradition. A writer in HARPER'S for March of 1941 claimed, perhaps correctly, that "the Southern Negro has the most beautiful manners in the world." But Lillian Smith in her STRANGE FRUIT said that "Good manners are still the best life insurance a colored person ever took out."¹⁴Necessity is the mother of manners and of just about everything else. Progressives must always seem ill-mannered to those whose gracious way of life they disturb.

Surely, we may say, there has been progress in voting by Negroes in the South. True, their vote has risen from about a million in 1954 to a million and a half in 1958. In Louisiana, for example, in 1956, over a hundred and fifty thousand Negroes were registered, more than twice as many as in 1952, and the largest number since 1896 when the "last" of Negro candidates were eliminated. But, as Paul Klapper, who was one of our very few Jewish college presidents, used to say, statistics are like sausages: only the maker knows what goes into them.

It happens that in the peculiar state of Louisiana the embattled Long faction has favored Negro voting while the anti-Longs opposed it.¹⁵ In Mississippi Negroes vote

freely in only six of eighty-two counties. In Alabama they are a third of the people but six percent of the voters. Of Georgia's million Negroes, only 160,00 are registered, mostly in the cities, and there remain five counties in Northern Florida where, in 1958, hardly more than a hundred out of more than sixteen thousand adult Negroes have been able to register to vote. In South Carolina, surprisingly enough, there has been comparatively little open restriction on voting, though in one county the entire faculty of a Negro school, and one Howard University graduate, were turned down on a literacy test.

A section of the white South has replied to the advances with such vigor—and with so much economic, political, legislative, and propaganda—that talk of progress may seem dreamy. The NAACP lost 40,000 members during 1957. It estimated that two million dollars was made available from taxpayers' money to spread the doctrine of white supremacy throughout the nation. For example, \$327,000 was allocated to the Georgia Education Commission for the purpose.

And the fact remains that in Mississippi at least two admitted white rapists of Negro girls were acquitted. The notorious White Citizens Councils have used blackjacks, bombs, and mob attack where threats were inadequate, using as much or more "force and violence" than Communists are supposedly going to use sometime, somewhere.¹⁶ If we are even to aim at justice and progress, we must consider the fact that one-tenth of the nation, which is Negro, has not one representative among ninety-six Senators. (The ninety-seventh and ninety-eighth from Alaska will probably be white not Indian; we may shudder to think what color Hawaiian Senators may yet be; Southerners have not been enthusiastic about statehood for Alaska and Hawaii.)

Nor is there a Negro mayor of any real city in the United States. No Governor of any state. None in the Cabinet or Supreme Court and few elsewhere in the Federal judiciary. Indeed there are a growing number of state legislators and city councilmen; but where there should be forty-three or more Congressmen in the House, to represent one-tenth of the nation, there are three out of 435.

Those who are satisfied with the rate of progress can point to individual achievements of Negroes and their recognition: Ralph Bunche in the United Nations; Marian Anderson, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Harry Belafonte in music; Langston Hughes and Richard Wright in literature; Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Althea Gibson in sports. During 1957 Lena Horne, Eartha Kitt, and Sidney Poitier were stars on Broadway and in films; Mattiwilda Dobbs sang in a title role at the Metropolitan and Mahalia Jackson sang for the nation on television; Bill Russell helped the Boston Celtics become world champions in professional basketball;¹⁷ James Brown was Rookie of the Year in the National Football League; Hank Aaron was Most Valuable Player in National League baseball.

Perhaps achievements in baseball have done more than Ralph Bunche's Nobel Prize, certainly more than his membership on the New York City Board of Higher Education, to weaken the many-sided stereotyped image of the Negro in the nation's mind—the grinning clown, the sullen criminal, the comical eye-roller fearing ghosts, the ignoramus misusing big words, the childlike and contented worker, the angry malcontent, the devout worshipper, the razor fighter, the faithful servant. The image is three-sided: menacing, entertaining, servile. It does not seem to matter that the image is impossibly inconsistent and contradictory.

In essence the image is that of the servant, justifying the Negro's place as lowest man on the economic totem pole. The male servant is usually gray-haired, thin, and dignified; the female is usually fat and undignified. Really, we should often give ourselves True and False tests, knowing that the scores we make will hit the Negro where he, or anyone, lives—right square in the self-respect.

The world-famous Negro scholar W. E. B. Du Bois wrote, more than fifty years ago: "personal disrespect and mockery, the ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and the boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black, from Toussaint to the devil,—before this rises a sickening despair that would disarm and discourage any nation save that black host to whom 'discouragement' is an unwritten word." This was in *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*. Today Dr. Du Bois might qualify this, noting the courage of new nations like Ghana, Iraq, or Indonesia. And today the lives of American Negroes are not much richer in respect, and the unvanquished spirit is still there, if we can believe Langston Hughes' character Jesse B. Semple.¹⁸

"Simple" says: "I have been underfed, underpaid, undernourished, and everything but undertaken. I been bit by dogs, cats, mice, rats, poll parrots, fleas, chiggers, bedbugs, granddaddies, mosquitoes, and a gold-toothed woman.... In this life I been abused, confused, misused, accused, false-arrested, tried, sentenced, paroled, blackjacked, beat, third-degreed, and near about lynched.... but I am still here. Daddy-o, I'm still here!"

This voice is quite different of course from those of the un-heroes—doomed, despairing, aloof, cynical—that we hear in certain novels by Ralph Ellison, Chester

Himes, or even Richard Wright. It is, perhaps, the voice of Spartacus, of Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and of a stevedore in Chesnut's *THE MARROW OF TRADITION* who would "rather be a dead nigger any day dan a live dog."

Slave or free, countrified or urban, an extraordinary number of Negroes have demonstrated the ultimate virtue, courage, that Dr. Du Bois wrote of, and which may be considered more than the private property of Anglo-Saxons. Recently and most dramatically thousands of Southern city Negroes have demonstrated this in the Montgomery, Alabama, bus strike, and in Little Rock, Arkansas, nine youngsters have "run" gauntlets repeatedly with quite as much courage as any Indian brave or wilderness scout—Mongol, Saxon, or Celt. With courage, there can be progress in the shift to city life. Preaching in a Montgomery Baptist church, the Reverend Vernon Johns of Baltimore said that his people were coming out of the cain't's: we cain't do this, we cain't do that, we cain't go here, we cain't eat there. In the countryside it had been little more than work from kin to cain't—from dawn when you kin see till dark when you cain't see. But Mr. Johns warned against undue optimism, like that of the man who said "It's all right so far" as he fell past the twelfth story window going down from the 20th.

Poor Progress, her feet often hurt, like those of the domestic workers of Montgomery who walked so many miles to serve white ladies rather than ride Jim Crow buses. She limps, steps back, goes sideways and round about. In cities, especially in the North, there are better schools, higher wages, a wider range of opportunities for jobs. Yet these are not the only indexes of progress. Richard Dorson states that there is loss, or regress, in culture and character, with the shift from country to city.¹⁹ In the first book we have about Southern folklore transported to the North, Negro Folktales in Michigan, he

writes: "Northern Negroes, growing up among cities and factories, supercilious toward their Southern brothers, had severed and discarded their folk heritage.... Often miserably poor in the world's goods... plantation folk were richly endowed in cultural tradition; their vibrancy and animation contrasted curiously with the general listlessness and business obsession of the old Northerners."

This view may be quite one-sided, as we shall see, but there is hardly any question that most Negroes, like the rest of us, decline very seriously as artists when they give up folk singing, dancing, and tale telling for "the spectator arts" of reading comic books, looking at movies and television, listening to radio. We become better informed but we are passive. There is loss as well gain, even if television does not have the Lamarckian effect that the late Fred Allen predicted—very small brains and eyes as big as cantaloupes . We must all feel at times that it would be better if we would become twentieth century Luddites smashing machines: what fun to axe all television sets, dynamite all broadcasting stations, invade all movie theaters and dismember the projectors, disperse all atomic piles and, with our bare hands, tear down the dams that turn dynamos so that Nature's water might run freely once more and we would do our reading, if any, by God's own sunlight or by firelight as Abe Lincoln did.

But the matter is most complex. Now hear this—as the Navy chaps say. According to James N. Wallace in *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL* in 1956, a Negro novelist of Chicago said that "A Negro who leaves a Mississippi Delta cabin for the worst Harlem slum has made a good trade.... he wants to be treated with the dignity of a human being. A white person can't really appreciate this, but the North is the only place where a Negro can assert his manhood." And a Chicago professional man said, "we have school

as tightly segregated as anything in Alabama, but most of those 'Negro' schools here are better than the white schools in the South, which our children can't get into anyway."

Then J. H. Parker, a former Tennessee sharecropper who now heads the million-dollar-a-year Parker House Sausage Company, said: "The Negro is pretty well hemmed in economically in the South..." And the executive director of Chicago's Urban League stated that "There are two main reasons why the Negro leaves the South—to improve his economic situation and standard of living and to get the hell out of there."

This dignity, those schools, these jobs must be remembered when we hear Mr. Dorson, the folklorist, speak nostalgically of the Southern Negro's "rich and zesty vocabulary," "striking sense of imagery," and "bold spirit for word usage." Mr. Dorson may be right about this, but so is Milton Mezzrow, the white jazz clarinetist, when, in *REALLY THE BLUES*, he admires the ingenious "jive" talk of youthful Harlem, a "high-spirited" language. Mr. Dorson implies that Northern Negro talk is listless. Mr. Mezzrow speaks of the Southern Negro's strictly cautious and defensive private lingo, the language of a "beaten" people. There is nothing very clear here to be learned about progress or decline. Perhaps the main point is included in Ames' Third Law: Underdogs bite below the belt. No secret tricky language, no double-talk, of slaves, serfs, women, or children can be bold, though it may be lively and admirable. This is so even though Mezzrow is right in saying that Northern jive-talking kids mean to show that they are not "the ounce-brained tongue-tied stuttering Sambos of the blackface vaudeville routine, the Lazybones of the comic strips, the old Mose's of the Southern plantations."

There is no question that our city slum life is in many respects a corruption of fairly decent farm life, as Christopher Rand showed in an admirable series of articles in

the NEW YORKER during December of 1957,²⁰ describing the insecurity, crime, drug addiction, and violence that New York City offers to peasants coming in from Puerto Rico. In the North of the United States a man may become a police officer or detective. But in Chicago's South Side Bronzeville there was for many years a Negro plain-clothes man, famous for hating and killing Negroes. This I learned from Chicago's famous blues singer, Big Bill Broonzy.²¹

Years ago I learned from my brother of white boys who would take the family car, during vacations from military school, and drive fast through Negro St. Louis, hoping to hit "somebody." Such hunting, such "sport," can hardly be equaled in rural communities, even in lynching "parties." It isn't always "nice" in the country nor in the city. The main thing is to know who has power. Here comes Ames' Fourth Law: He who is strong can do as he likes—even shoot his mouth off. North and South the law still is: Negroes must keep their mouths shut. In the South a Negro prisoner escapes. As Alan Lomax puts it in that best of our song books, FOLK SONG: U.S.A., there is "a riding boss with the Winchester across the pommel of his saddle. There is always a pack of bloodhounds..." And Vera Hall, "a peace-loving cook and washerwoman and pillar of the choir in her Baptist church," sings a work-song or blues, "Another Man Done Gone," which pleads a loving ignorance:

Another man done gone...

From the county farm...

I didn't know his name...

He had a long chain on...

He killed another man...

I don't know where he's gone...

This is a beautiful, meaningful song, for what it hints rather than says. Saying nothing is less helpful to others in a New York slum. A mother of three daughters told Dan Wakefield (*HARPER'S*, June, 1958) how it is in East Harlem: "Yes, there are times when you see a car pull up and they push out a girl all beat up and her clothes torn.... The thing you learn, the first thing you learn is 'I didn't see anything.' No matter where you were or what happened, you didn't see anything." Here in the city you fear your own people instead of helping your own people. Ames' Fifth Law: It all depends.

So the feelings, thoughts, and arts of country people go into the slums, stews, and saloons of cities. The wonderful American blues journey there and become more sophisticated, more conscious of social law, more cynical, and less beautiful—that is, more remote from what human beings can and should be, which is the best of poetry. City blues sing a dirty world. Instrumental jazz has sung the same world and—tortured, bitter, resentful as it is, despite all excellence—may one day take a lower place than the rural folk music of its origin in the long history of art. As for the ballads of the city slum like "Frankie and Johnny" and "Stackalee," they have spotty, cynical virtues and even now clearly cannot rank with "The Ballet of the Boll Weevil," "Poor Lazarus," the John Henry songs—to say nothing of the big stirring spirituals like "Pharaoh's Army got Drowned" and "Go Down, Moses."

As for folk tales, those of the Old South are not necessarily better—and here we may assume that story differs from song and music being by nature more realistic and prosaic. But the old and new are different. In *LAY MY BURDEN DOWN*, edited by B.

A. Botkin, a selection of statements by former slaves collected in the Thirties by the Works Projects Administration, we learn of a disease called "Malititis." Ordinarily only the ends, leavings, and entrails of hogs went to the slaves after butchering. But once a strong slave rose early and with a mallet sent all a plantation's hogs to their long rest. When the master appeared, the slaves told him sadly that the hogs were diseased, had died of Malititis. He quickly told them that they could have the meat.

Outwitting the master may have been easier in the Old South. Richard Dorson records an extraordinarily different kind of story that developed after the great Negro migration to the North, and after segregation in the South had changed the American world. "A colored man newly returned to Alabama was telling friends about the better treatment he had received up North, when a white man passed by and overheard him. He and his gang promptly seized the Negro, dug a hole and placed him in it, with the dirt packed up to his neck, and sicked two fierce bulldogs on the offender. But the Negro dodged his head so agilely that the dogs could not get a grip.

'Hold your head still and fight fair,' commanded the white man." Such stories contradict our national stereotyped image of the Negro. They suggest that typically he is not simple, childlike, and contented with generally kind treatment from paternalistic whites. Rather he, and his folk songs and stories, both rural and urban, old and new, are bitter, sophisticated, mature, and ironic.

Such tales not only contradict the common image of the Negro but reveal his picture of himself—which is something that in general America knows little about. A more subtle "Colored Man" tale, collected by Dorson in Michigan, seems to be urban and modern. It satirizes white supremacy in religion, the idea of the peculiarly devout Negro,

the irresponsibility and voices of disreputable Negroes, and at the same time has as its main point the aspiration of all for freedom and equality.

This story deals with a time when there was only one Negro in heaven. Naturally he felt quite lonely there and so spent his days on earth with a friend who made liquor in a still. He drank too much, was late in getting to the pearly gates in the evenings, and was drunk and disorderly up there. God threatened to take away his wings and cast him out of Paradise if he didn't reform. But the very next day he stole some pearls, went down to earth, got drunk and broke his wings in a fight, jumped on his distilling friend for not having any more whiskey, and then returned to Heaven early, long before the pearly gates were closed.

"'God,' he said, 'I guess you'd better take your wings' (they was all broke and dragging when he got there) 'because you give 'em to the wrong feller. But you know one thing, God, I was a flying black bastard while I did have them.'" Such stories are in their way assertions of dignity and forces for progress.

It has long been common for historians, folklorists, and other persons of education and superior station to assume that all poor, unschooled people, not only Negroes, have been simple-minded, credulous, spontaneous, instinctive and untutored in their tales, songs and other folk arts. Remarkable accomplishments like the slave spirituals are surprising and mysterious. Sometimes there are solemn debates as to whether or not "the folk" have had knowledge and brains enough to be discontented, to protest, to desire social change, to be conscious artists.

A story from slavery days may throw light on this subject. It might seem easy, even natural, to assume that the slaves must have been far more "backward" than modern urban Negroes, but one of their "Master and Old John" tales is a close parallel to the one told above about the flying angel, making similar points with a similar sophisticated humor. In *LAY MY BURDEN DOWN* we read of a time when the Master disguises himself as a Lord and comes to take John to heaven in answer to a prayer. At the last moment John changes his mind. So he asks the Lord to stand back in order to dim the radiance of his countenance, and then rushes past him. John's children begin to cry but his wife comforts them.

"You know that the Lord can't outrun your pappy, specially when he's barefooted." The thoughtless animal-like Negroes of white tradition simply could not have created such stories, the wonderful spirituals, numberless satirical blues songs, or have produced so many able and courageous leaders.

No doubt Negroes have a much better understanding of whites' image of them than whites have of the Negro image of the superior race. The late Walter White, President of the NAACP, in "Why I remain a Negro" showed a shocking awareness that among whites there is shiftlessness, cowardice, dishonesty, stupidity, and body odor. On this last point, he once quoted James Weldon Johnson to a man of German birth who, on a subway, complained about the distinctive smell of Negroes: "Do you imagine that the manufacture of deodorants is exclusively for a Negro market? I notice that the advertisements invariably feature a young and beautiful girl—a white girl." Suppose, he asked the man, that you and I had to work on the docks or over hot kitchen stoves and live in antiquated crowded tenements. Would we then reek of lilies of the valley? Mr.

White found that a Negro was not properly a Negro at all if he did not conform to the artistic, the theatrical image "with the skin, the odor, the dialect, the shuffle, the imbecile good nature."

American Negroes like all people of inferior status—slaves, serfs, many women and children—have had to become experts in hiding their intelligence, in pretending stupidity and irrationality. Disguise may be learned very young, along with prejudice, as the Philadelphia Early Childhood Project found a decade ago. ("Prejudice Can Be Unlearned," THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, July 25, 1948). The project reported that Negro children often masked their feelings about whites, saying "They are nice. They smiles at you." It found false the common assumption that children do not "catch" prejudice till the "middle years," nine to eleven, and that five-year-olds come to kindergarten with well-defined feelings about race, religion, and economic status. The anti-feelings follow the adult pattern: most against Negroes, Jews next, then Catholics.

Typically the white tots thought that Negroes beat or kill, carry guns and knives, are drunken and diseased. Jews are "funny," which is not so bad, but they might cheat you. Catholics are merely different—in religion. There are few stereotypes about white Protestants, and these are favorable, given by Protestant children: "American," "white," "best." The Negro children, though they may say "I like colored best," cannot avoid sharing the prejudice against their own people and some desire to be white. Their feelings must be far more complex, ambivalent, thoughtful, sophisticated. They may say that whites are nice and smile at you, and feel also that they are not nice and hurt you.

We may easily admit that our lower class majority is prejudiced and unthinking, that their folklore about colored people is a major barrier to progress and the civilization

of these United States. But a good deal of the myth obtains at all levels. Not only the "middle-class and family" magazines, but the urbane NEW YORKER seems never to tire of cartoons in which Africans are preparing to dine on white people, though in fact there are no cannibals in Africa. Perhaps here I may seem dogmatic in reverse, over-serious, puritanical, fussy and touchy, bent on taking all the fun out of life, imposing even more rigid taboos on the comedians who are already well known to be allowed few or no targets of ridicule except themselves. Yet in this matter of Negro progress—this vital question of world politics—every little thing plays its part. Here, as everywhere, it is the little of water that make the mighty ocean. (Ames' Fourth Law: Everything matters. Fifth Law: Sauce for the gander is not sauce for the goose, unfortunately.)

Perhaps it is even unfortunate that James Thurber, in MY WORLD AND WELCOME TO IT, tells how his colored maid was wont to call flickers by the name of fletchers. But if this was the fact, and rather charming, let it pass. What is harder to let pass is the generalized stereotype: "A flicker is a bird which, if it were really named fletcher, would be called flicker by all the colored cooks in the United States."

No doubt abstractly all humor is incongruity, the juxtaposition of ill-mated things—the child who unexpectedly uses or misuse "big" words, or the colored preacher or maid who does the same. But not many jokes are restricted to a simple delight in the ridiculous. Most jokes are cruel, social, even political. They are about and "against" people, stupid or "dumb" people—especially foreigners, immigrants, servants, farmers, women, Swedes, Italians, Irishmen, Negroes, Jews, Catholics. No one ever heard a joke which began, "There was this Protestant white man..."

Of course all our immigrants have been made fun of. The homespun colonists like Yankee Doodle were figures of fun to the English, the Tories, and later the dominant British-American population was quick to ridicule all the waves of poor immigrants—Irish, German, Italian, Scandinavian, Jewish, and so on. But the Negro immigrants have been a special case. In the first place they were the first immigrants—after the Asian "Indians"—the first permanent "settlers"—for the Vikings finally left—that were not Indians.

This may be a picayune point to make, but, after all, there are many of us who put great store by, or stock in, claims to be the old, real, and true Americans, landing on Roanoke Island with Raleigh's colonists, at Jamestown with Smith, at Plymouth with the Pilgrims. Nearly every writing, on all scholarly levels, that deals with the matter says that Negroes first came to the land at Jamestown in 1619. The fact is that almost a century earlier, in 1526, Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon planted a colony of five hundred persons with one hundred Negro slaves in South Carolina. Some of the slaves rebelled and fled to live with the Indians. The white colonists soon departed, leaving the Negroes to be the oldest, permanent, non-Indian, U.S. Americans.

And for well over four centuries their lot in society and in art has not been a happy one. They were considered ridiculous as slaves, in the minstrel shows then and still today, and the "jokes" about them have not changed much. A widely-distributed paperback volume of BEST JOKES FOR ALL OCCASIONS includes fifty-five jokes about Negroes. Twenty-one make the point—in a few it is the secondary point—that Negroes are ignorant, illiterate, or stupid. Five show them as thieves—of chickens chiefly. In two clergymen are mercenary; in four Negroes are social climbers, delighting

in fancy titles or misusing big words; in four they are violent; in four they are adulterous, promiscuous, or over-sexed; in two superstitious; in two irresponsible or incompetent; in others they are cowardly, lying, and stingy. One gives us the very fat woman. Nearly all use extreme dialect spelling. Only six seem relatively innocuous. Perhaps the least side-splitting is this one: Mrs. Brown (to colored maid)—"Lizzie, do you and your husband quarrel as much as you used to?"

Lizzie—"No, indeed, ma'am."

Mrs. Brown—"What made you stop, Lizzie?"

Lizzie—"Well, ma'am, he died." Ames' Sixth Law is: One Man's belly laugh is another man's belly ache. And the Seventh: Laugh and few laugh with you; weep, and everybody understands.

Such a book as BEST JOKES is more or less influential. It had five printings after appearing in the New Home Library in 1942 (a treasure for the home); there was a Blue Ribbon edition in 1946; a Permabook edition of 1948 that had reached an eighth printing in 1955 and was distributed by Pocket Books, Inc. And this particular Inc. may well be, as they themselves say, "the world's largest publishers and distributors of low-priced books for the entire family." And hardly anything can be more sacred and pure than the family.

But Negro families must face the facts described by Bill Broonzy: Now if you're white, you're right;

And if you're brown, stick around;

But if you're black—

Oh, brother, git back, git back, git back! The situation is not much different: the jokes are

much the same as they were in Wehman's Joke Book of 1873. True, then, pictures of Negroes without titles or gags apparently were automatically funny. This far we have progressed. But the presumed stupidity of Negroes is unchanged. And there is one regressive difference. In 1873 there were a few jokes that seemed to have an abolitionist character. A colored couple were married by a white clergyman and after the ceremony he said, "It is customary for the clergyman to kiss the bride but under the circumstances will omit this part of the proceedings." The Negro groom replied, "It is customary to pay the clergyman a fee for his services, but under the circumstances we shall omit that part of the proceedings also."

Generally in jokes and the other folk or popular arts, the Negro remains a fool, a servant, a comic, or a villain. Indeed so also are other un-blond people like Mexicans, Italians, and Indians. At best they appear, if they appear at all, as "assistant heroes," like Tonto the Indian assistant to the Lone Ranger or various worshipful Africans who assist Tarzan in his conflicts with bad blacks or naughty whites who threaten to louse up the jungle idyll.

The highest barrier to Negro progress is, however, not the distorted image of them given in folk, popular, and fine art, but no image at all. It is not flattering or encouraging not even to exist. But in most of our arts one-tenth of the nation is simply not there. Millions of Negroes go to movies where they do not see themselves even in mob and street scenes, buy newspapers and magazines in which they do not appear at all in photographs, advertisements, or stories. P. T. Barnum thought that a knock was as good as a boost—publicity-wise. (Ames' Sixth Law: It is better to be spat upon than nothing.)

Again and always the pattern of progress is most uneven. It is certainly true that many of the "quality" juvenile books now treat Negro children sympathetically. But these are read by a small number of highbrowed children (yours and mine) in a country where, in any case, 17% of the population reads books of any kind compared with 55% in England. Perhaps the enlightenment will filter down from the better-educated or upper classes to the masses. But meanwhile ignoring of the existence of Negroes spreads. For example, in the old Tom Swift books there was an "amusing" old "darky" named Eradicator, and his malapropisms were a joy. But at least he existed, along with the electric cannon and runabouts. In the new Tom Swift Junior series, Eradicator is gone, but there are foreign spies. In this there is no clear sign of progress.

Still there is underlying and dramatic change—both in the social structure and in ideas. A majority of the people in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas are now living in cities or towns. In 1939 there were less than 700,000 trade unionists in thirteen Southern states—now there are two million or more. The younger and better educated white Southerners are, the more they believe that Negroes are naturally as intelligent as whites. Back in 1942 only 20% of the white South believed this, but in 1956 it was 60%—an amazing and rapid change. (Report of the National Opinion Research Center in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, December, 1956)

We may hope that steady forces of industrialization and formal education are making the South, and North, more democratic. At the same time there has been the revival of affection for the old romantic Lost Cause of the slave owners. Many young men in the North have taken to flying Confederate flags and wearing Rebel caps, and we may wonder just why they did so especially at college basketball contests in New York

City where Negro students were among the players. This might for some simply have been a reactionary symbolism; for others it might be a vague, anarchistic, even existentialist rebellion—a nonconformist act in an age of conformity, anxiety, cold war, when direct or genuine youthful revolt is quite out of fashion.

Anyone can find straws in the wind blowing in both directions. A firm loyalty to the Old Cause was noted by Bennett Cerf in the *SATURDAY REVIEW*. In Butler, Alabama, a Mrs. Elliott gave her husband Commager's two-volume *THE BLUES AND THE GRAY*. He read volume one eagerly but refused even to open the second. "Not for me," he sighed. "In volume two we're gonna get the Hell beat outa us." There is realism, at least in this. But I have been assured intelligent Southerners believe otherwise. A bright, very good-looking—and therefore reliable—recent graduate of one of our finest Northern colleges for women reports that a fellow-student from the South made this explanation:²² When General Lee and General Grant finally met to talk over certain mutual problems, Grant asked if he might examine Lee's sword. Lee being, of course, a true polite-type Southern gent, handed it to him—and that is how the "surrender" came about. (Ames' Sixth Law: If you pretend it isn't there, maybe it will go away.)

All the wishful thinking is by no means on the one side. In the powerful new art of the movies, for example, liberal hopes are raised from time to time by a film that portrays dignified Negroes. Perhaps *PINKY*, in 1949, was typical of the genre. Here an attractive young Negro woman is a graduate nurse, well mannered and well educated, and she advances to administer a school. However, this is a segregated school and Pinky, aided by the "best" white folks, knows her place, and may be, in the last analysis, little more than a thin "Mammy," or streamlined Aunt Tom. Whatever good effects such a film

had, in the same decade GONE WITH THE WIND as novel and movie did far more to keep the old plantation fire burning. Only more subtly, it did exactly the same job as THE BIRTH OF A NATION, and the film had done the job by 1944 on an estimated audience of 64 million in the U.S. and Canada alone. All in all, taking this and that into consideration, and making due allowances for so-and-so, Negro progress in Hollywood has not been by giant steps. When, for recent example, Sidney Poitier had a fine dignified role in M-G-M's EDGE OF THE CITY, everyone noted how "unusual" this was.

The effects of the arts are said to be intangible, and are hard to measure. So perhaps it is best to digress into statistics again, briefly. A favorite of optimists, white and colored, is literacy. It increased among Negroes from 5% at Emancipation to 85% in 1944. One might cry, "Jubilee!" One might say that Negroes are therefore in, if not like Flynn. But even a rare believer in progress may raise doubts. After all, Japan has long had one of the lowest, perhaps the lowest, rates of illiteracy in the world. And this while remaining very poor and unequal under an iron rule by generals, monopolists, and semi-feudal landlords. (Somebody's Law: It takes many swallows to make a summer, or, the Christmas turkey is fine as far as it goes.)

We have, too, very fine statistics on lynchings. According to the Tuskegee Institute, these have declined from a peak of 161 in the year 1892 to only one, or none, usually, in 1947 and thereafter. This looks good. But certainly the old-fashioned lynching by an illegal mob has found its substitutes. There have been larger mobs, or riotings, in Northern cities. Simple but non-public murders have done similar work in the South. There are "legal" lynchings often enough when police shoot prisoners who may or may not really be "trying to escape." For various reasons, like trying to vote or being Jewish, a

great many people in the South have recently found their homes, churches or synagogues bombed, their bodies beaten or perforated with bullets. The actual number of lynchings, or anti-legal killings may well be increasing. But, though it is scant comfort to those who die, and their families and friends, there is real progress in that the deeds are seldom open, public, sanctioned by the community. There exist such organizations as the Southern Association of Women Against Lynching, opposed to the notion that the practice protects Southern Womanhood.²³

Southern White Manhood has long maintained that its women must have protection from colored men, and have it they would whether they needed it or desired it or not. Nothing, of course, was said about the protection of Negro women from white males. For centuries women have been guarded and restricted as Negroes have been, in many ways, for their own good. Dolly Madison, according to Harriet Martineau, said that the Southern wife was "the chief slave of the harem." Gunnar Myrdal pointed out (II, 1073) that American myths about Negroes are basically the same as those used in all paternalistic societies—agrarian ones especially—to rule women and children.

Even today, even in the upper classes, statistics and common beliefs about the progress and emancipation of women are open to very much the same kind of doubt that applies to the common belief, or semi-myth, about Negro progress.

With industry and cities, with schools, doing new jobs, both Negroes and women advance and the myths weaken. But still there is paradox, or contradiction. City air is free, as they used to say in the Middle Ages, and it is polluted. Neighbors are less watchful, less gossipy, less helpful. Country air is pure but life there is rigid, small, mean. We must guard against being too partial to one or the other—and also against being too

impartial. If there are slums in cities, so are there rural slums where children are rickety, pasty-faced starch-eaters. Murder, insanity, neurosis, sex-crimes, beatings are common enough among the simple happy country folk. Even the most "secure" white Protestant "old" Americans there get anxious stomach ulcers.

A South Carolina backwoods town, carefully studied by Hylan Lewis in 1949 (BLACKWAYS OF KENT, 1955), had very high rates of disease and death. Among the Negroes there was more frustration than stability: among children, quite sufficient "sadism, thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, and trouble-giving." The men turned to whiskey and adultery. There was Negro group solidarity and group self-hatred. There was little racial violence, except in recurrent police brutality, but the Negroes felt that whites could invade any aspect of their lives.

Yes, in many ways Bronzeville and Harlem and the other Negro ghettos are better, for whites cannot invade so easily. You may go for many blocks, or for weeks, without seeing a white face. There are more rodents in Harlem but maybe it is less of a rat-race than Madison Avenue. There is cheating and chiseling and violence but there are also happy times, friendliness, ease, release from tension. When the novelist Ralph Ellison once recorded a happy little rhyme game at a Harlem playground.

"You know this one, Mister? See, you meet a guy you know and he's doing something good and you say, 'Gee that's fine.' And the other guy says, 'Wine!' And you say, Sho nough, that's fine as wine,
As a George pine,
Two old grandmothers drinking wine. By comparison, perhaps Fifth Avenue is, as

someone said, "a street where a lot of people spend money they haven't earned buying things they don't need to impress people they don't like."

Indeed, what shall we say of upper-class white progress, or that of any of us? Of course, when all else fails, there is always the standard of living: a car in every garage, a chicken in every pot and two more in the deep freeze, a pot in every bathroom, and a coffee-pot that will sing you an old folk song when the percolating is done. But a casual survey of newspapers, magazines, and popular entertainment suggests that the average prosperous American is well poisoned by nicotine and alcohol, perhaps heroin, is sick in mind and at heart, already half way to the laughing academy, works too hard or takes too many coffee breaks, has no job or needs two jobs to make out, works overtime or has too much time on his hands, is fearful of speaking his mind, of a depression, of bombs, of being beaten up.

In the city now we are especially concerned about juvenile delinquency and gang wars. There may be some little comfort in noting that urban adults, at least, have become more peaceful with the years—that is, in their folkways, outside violent crime organized as a business. Before the Civil War New York was filled with warring gangs like the Bowery Boys, the True Blue Americans, the O'Connell Guards, and the Dead Rabbits. Protestant landlords had visited nothing worse on them in Ireland than they visited, during the Civil War draft riots, on Negroes, policemen, and soldiers. Women auxiliaries, says Herbert Asbury in *THE GANGS OF NEW YORK*, sliced flesh with butcher knives, tore out eyes and tongues, hanged victims to trees, sprayed them with oil and burned them. In Old World and American country life, the people were not like this. No, this was

treatment given by landlords to rebellious peasants or sharecroppers. Enlightenment, freedom, brutality and corruption accompany the great shift from the land to the city.²⁴

The old folkways, myths, superstitions, and arts weaken in the city and new ones are born. Here, and finally, one of the newest and fastest developing of our popular arts is most relevant. Science fiction and fantasy specialize in questions of progress and, more often, non-progress, regress, or disaster. The adult audience for these urban folktales has been expanding rapidly ever since Orson Welles' famous invasion from Mars scared the drawers off any number of supposedly sane and informed sub-and-exurbanites in New Jersey.

Before 1938 the readers were a small cult of large boys and a large cult of small boys. So far probably the most influential writer in the field has been Edgar Rice Burroughs, whose Tarzan books alone had circulated by 1947 in an estimated thirty million copies (Frank Luther Mott, *GOLDEN MULTITUDES*), to say nothing of the movies, comic strips and comic books, and the extensive series of Martian stories. If we believe that the art of popular fiction, as well as the art of advertising, actually influences human minds, Burroughs' ideas on progress, Negroes, slavery, and democracy are most interesting.

Every schoolboy knows how cowardly and cruel the "blacks" are in the Tarzan stories: one definitely prefers the apes, even though there is a special little tribe of Gungadins-like colored folks, called Waziri, who are sort of house servants on the plantation and adore Tarzan—that is, Lord Greystoke. Of course the faithful servant is vital to racist art and appears on Mars also.

For example, in *THE CHESSMEN OF MARS* (1922), the hero's daughter has a devoted slave.

As every schoolboy should know our hero on Mars is John Carter (perhaps related to Colonel Carter's Christmas?), of Virginia (natürlich), and the best fighter (with any weapon) on two planets. His daughter Tara's slave girl is confident that "no anger could displace the love of the princess for her slave." Soon after the girl thinks this, the fiery little princess loses her temper and threatens to sell the girl. But quickly she apologizes and offers the slave freedom instead.

A normal, average slave, one might think, or even a typical personal maid, or houseworker, would jump at this opportunity. But not Uthia, which is the name of our girl, on Burroughs' Mars. "I do not wish my freedom if it would separate me from you, Tara of Helium," replied Uthia. "I am happy here with you—I think that I should die without you." Well now Uthia, that is real sweet. And, incidentally, Helium is an excellent name for Mars—or perhaps it is one kingdom. As we cats or hipsters say, it is a gasser. But the main point is that on Burroughs' Mars, slavery is a benevolent institution. In this particular book, "blacks" and intellectuals are most unpleasant. A fighting aristocrat from the Old Dominion state upholds old stable values on Mars.

It is true that most of our current "science fiction" writers are not racists but they do follow Burroughs in an essential denial of human progress. They too suggest that Man's lust for lordship, loot, and ladies is eternal. In the long run instinct and emotion dominate and science and reason, even after extraordinary achievements, fail. More than a few directly attack racism and even cheer for Negroes, as the much-admired Ray

Bradbury has done, but the burden of their songs is quite consistently anti-scientific and anti-human.

On the surface, this is not so. These writers are great ones for being human, not "merely" intellectual, logical, factual. Like so many other writers today they falsely oppose reason and emotion, knowledge and instinct. They suggest that it is bad for us to let "cold, inhuman science" louse up our warm, natural, human feelings and animality. But this is a shallow and ignorant argument. Cool calm science tells the hot Southern aristocrat that he is crazy with it comes to skin color and that Negroes have just as good a claim as anyone else to the warm emotions of hope, pride, and love of humanity.

There is no real war between intellect and feeling. We love what we think is good and hate what we think is bad, and the more we know the better directed our emotions are. There is a seeming paradox. Man is the least instinctive of all animals. He has to learn nearly everything he does. It is natural to him to be "artificial," to be social, to think, to use tools, to alter his environment "unnaturally." Progress for Negroes and for everyone else can be said to mean a "harnessing" of emotions and instincts to pull for love rather than hate. Emotional "science," like that of the Nazis, shrivels humane emotion, while cold hard science makes people bloom, be fruitful, and multiply.

So we can say that this new or expanded popular art, science fiction and fantasy, almost the last refuge of the social critic in the Age of Conformity, despite its satires on racism, nationalism, provinciality, the military mind, the bureaucratic mind, advertising, and even economic monopoly, primarily teaches fear and hopelessness and helplessness.

Still, if we do not all die together (as a result of too much alienation or too much phony togetherness), in spite of all the gloomy predictions of science fictioneers, rugged conservatives, neo-Malthusians and neo-Agrarians, we shall progress and become more human. Black and brown people will learn to tolerate the whites. Machines will serve people more than they serve the best people. We will not have more babies than we can feed and educate. We shall somehow find ways to put up with a dull, drab mechanized existence in which we do not have to look down on those who are dark or skin, bearers of children, laborers at physical tasks. We will painfully adjust to a world that is color-blind, one where there are no pimps and prostitutes, no perverts or drug peddlers, no gangsters or grafters.

This could be a world where everyone eats, has a flush toilet, medical care, expert teaching—where everyone who is white, black, brown, yellow, red, or speckled has a chance to develop, to become an artist, athlete, craftsman, and intellectual. A new and higher Renaissance is almost within our grasp. Mankind is on the brink of becoming human. Arise, ye prisoners of ignorance and neurosis, you have nothing to lose but your prejudices! (Soft music, swelling to triumphant brass and fading to angels' harps. There is a shimmer of lovely harmonies and then from the arm of every chair in the theater a filet mignon pops up, broiled rare and seasoned with garlic salt. To the gnashing of teeth, the images fade on the screen and we salivate happily in the dark, holding hands.)

Notes

1. Botkin is referring to the US influence on global trade and policy. As the US was campaigning against communism during the Cold War, the status of black Americans was of great concern to minorities throughout the world. As such, US policy makers saw it in their best interest to advance the rights of black Americans in order to bolster the image of American democracy. See: Derrick A. Bell, Jr., "BROWN V. BOARD of EDUCATION and the INTEREST-CONVERGENCE DILEMMA," *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 93, no. 3, Jan. 1980, p. 518.
2. Botkin may be referring to the criticism of his theory of folklore. Folklorist Richard Dorson termed folklore practice like Botkin's "fakelore" in the belief that the material and historical contexts of folklore should not be taken into consideration when studying folklore. See: Richard M. Dorson, "Applied Folklore," in Dick Sweterlitsch, ed. *Papers on Applied Folklore* (Bloomington: Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series, no. 8, 1971), 40.
3. The urbanization of populations and the lore that was created in this process became of interest to Botkin and was the feature of his 1954 book *Sidewalks of America*. The notion of folklore being created and circulated in cities was a new idea to folklorists who were "used to thinking of folklore as something belonging to the past and to the country" (Botkin viii). "Even thirty-one years later *City Lore*'s director Steven Zeitlin was compelled to admit that '[urban] folklore is a new field'" (Widner 54). See: Benjamin Albert Botkin, *Sidewalks of America: Folklore, Legends, Sagas, Traditions, Customs, Songs, Stories, and Sayings of City Folk*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954, Print. Also see: Ronna Lee Widner, "Lore for the Folk: Benjamin A. Botkin and the Development of

Folklore Scholarship in America.” in eds. Lawrence R. Rodgers and Jerrold Hirsch, *America's Folklorist: B. A. Botkin and American Culture*, Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 2010, Print

4. Botkin presents some views on American and ancient slavery that many contemporary thinkers would take issue with. Here he is comparing pre-emancipation chattel slavery to industrial wage slavery, wondering if wage slavery might be more insidious. This line of thinking can be seen stretching back to the mid-nineteenth century with thinkers like Henry George. See: E. Sopprings Steele, "Henry George on Chattel and Wage Slavery," *American Journal of Economics & Sociology*, vol. 46, no. 3, July 1987, pp. 369-378.

5. This seems to be a rhetorical invention of Botkin's for this essay. In the essay, there is the basic "Ames' Law," as well as a "Third Law," two laws said to be the "Fourth Law," one "Fifth Law," and three laws said to be the "Sixth Law." Each law, regardless of its number, is different from the other ones. It is possible that a "Second Law" was written about on page seven of the essay, which is missing from the manuscript. It is unclear whether Botkin's numbering system for the Laws had any significance, or whether it is done with absurdist intention (Botkin does introduce the Laws calling himself a "demi-scientist"). Ames most likely refers to Jessie Daniel Ames, a Southern white woman who was an anti-lynching advocate and founder of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. See: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*, Rev ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, Print.

6. Alfred Toynbee was a prominent historian whose most influential work focused on the evolution of societies. Toynbee argued that societies go through a cyclical lifetime, progressing to a point of—usually self-inflicted—demise. He asserted that civilizations begin in a primitive stage and at first progress through conquest, later agrarianism, and finally advanced civilization. Civilizations, Toynbee posits, all go through a lifecycle like humans, yet the end of the lifecycle of a civilization is nearly always brought about from inside itself through mistreatment of weaker citizens by the powerful elite. See: Francis Neilson, "Toynbee's 'A Study of History,'" *American Journal of Economics & Sociology*, 6.4, July 1947: 451-72, Print.

7. Botkin is referring to Henry Adams' autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918). In this particular part of the book, Adams reflects on the Great Exposition of 1900 in Paris and the electrical generator dynamos that represented to him power, energy, and potential. Adams juxtaposes the power of the dynamo with the power of the Virgin, or Woman, noting that the power of the woman has been recognized and respected in other cultures—as reproduction, potential, and creation—but not in America. See: Henry Adams, Edward Chalfant, and Conrad Edick Wright, *The Education of Henry Adams: A Centennial Version*, Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2007, Print. See also: Christopher Perricone, "The Powers of Art: Reflections on 'The Dynamo and the Virgin,'" *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1991, pp. 256–275.

8. This refers to Eton College, Harrow School, Groton School, and Hotchkiss School, preparatory schools for boys in the United Kingdom and the northeast United States.

9. Botkin is trying to argue that the policies of discrimination in the South came to be long after the Civil War, implying that the prejudice fueling these policies might not be as

entrenched as some suggest. Such a statement minimizes the lasting potency of racism that has been recognized in contemporary thinking. Botkin seems to be deploying this line of argument in a pragmatic attempt to argue for swift policy change.

10. Howells' critical review of Charles W. Chesnutt's work centers around what he perceives as an illegitimacy to Chesnutt's claim to his black American experience, being considered a person who could "pass" as white. Howells states "as far as his race is concerned, or his sixteenth part of a race, it does not greatly matter whether Mr. Chesnutt invented their motives, or found them, as he feigns, among his distant cousins of the Southern cabins." See: William Dean Howells, "Mr. Charles W. Chesnutt's Stories," *The Atlantic*, May 1900, Web.

11. Botkin is pointing out the contradictory views of some conservatives on liberal culture. Steinbeck received widespread criticism for *The Grapes of Wrath* because of its depiction of the predicament of the poor, and he was accused of being a socialist. On the other hand, commentators of the New Criticism persuasion were eager to separate the anti-Semitic aspects of authors' lives and work such as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. New Critics espoused a form of cultural criticism that viewed a piece of work in-itself, without regard to historical and material contexts. See: Nicholas J. Karolides, *Literature Suppressed on Political Grounds*, Rev ed. New York: Facts On File, 2006, Print, Facts on File Library of World Literature. See also: Robert Casillo, *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988, Print. See also: Anthony Julius, *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, Print.

12. Virginius Dabney was a progressive teacher and journalist. He won a Pulitzer Prize for his advocacy against the poll tax, and was an advocate for desegregation. See: Mel Gussow, "Virginius Dabney, 94, Southern Writer Who Fought Segregation," *The New York Times*, December 29, 1995, Web. See also: Virginius Dabney, "School Integration," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, vol. 23, no. 12, 4/1/57, p. 376.

13. Harriet Martineau was the first female sociologist. She focused on women's status in society and economics. See: Michael R. Hill, and Susan Hoecker-Drysdale, *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, New York: Routledge, 2001, Print, Women and Sociological Theory.

14. Lillian Smith's novel *Strange Fruit* (1944) focused on an interracial relationship; at the time interracial marriage was illegal. The book was banned in a number of areas throughout the United States. See: Cheryl L. Johnson, "The Language of Sexuality and Silence in Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, vol. 27, no. 1, Sept. 2001, p. 1.

15. Huey Long was a progressive Democratic senator from Louisiana. He spoke out against wealthy elites of the nation, calling for wealth redistribution. Long was assassinated in 1935. See: T. Harry Williams, *Huey Long*, Knopf, 1969.

16. Botkin is drawing attention to the overwhelmingly nebulous and unsubstantiated accusations against the Communist Party during McCarthyism. See: Ellen Schrecker, "McCarthyism: Political Repression and the Fear of Communism," *Social Research* 71.4 (b): 1041-86, Print.

17. Bill Russell was captain of the Celtics during the 1956 Summer Olympics, in which they won a gold medal for America. Russell was the first black American coach in professional sports, and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama for his work during the Civil Rights Movement. See: George Vecsey, "Indomitable Russell Values One Accolade Above the Rest," *The New York Times*, February 12, 2011, Web.

18. Langston Hughes' character Jesse B. Semple, "Simple" for short, was a novel reworking of the stereotyped ignorant and comical black characters present in much of American culture. While Simple was indeed uneducated and humorous, he was an unusual character for the times he was written in; he was a "Negro comic figure at whom Negroes themselves can laugh without being ashamed. Simple is so human, so believable, and so much like each of us that we are drawn to him in spite of ourselves." See: Arthur P. Davis, "Jesse B. Semple: Negro American," *Phylon* (1940-1956), vol. 15, no. 1, 1954, pp. 21-28.

19. Botkin is drawing attention to Dorson's conservative view of folklore and culture. Dorson treats the culture of those who shift to the city as an object in-itself. In doing so, he ignores the context surrounding the culture that Botkin believes is vital to an understanding of the people. Dorson ignores the complexity and nuance that is created in this shift to the city: opportunities, dangers, knowledge, oppression, aspects both positive and negative.

20. Botkin is referring to a series of articles by Christopher Rand, chronicling the experiences of Puerto Rican immigrants in New York City. From November through December of 1957 the reporter had four articles focusing on this subject. See: Christopher

Rand, "I-EL BARRIO DE NUEVA YORK," *The New Yorker*, November 30, 1957, Web. See also: Christopher Rand, "II-DOWN ON THE ISLAND," *The New Yorker*, December 7, 1957, Web. See also: Christopher Rand, "PUERTO RICANS: AMONG THE COLD PEOPLE," *The New Yorker*, December 14, 1957, Web. See also: Christopher Rand, "THE PUERTO RICANS: JOINING THE STREAM," *The New Yorker*, December 21, 1957, Web.

21. Big Bill Broonzy was a prolific and massively influential blues singer who began his career singing country blues and transitioned to an urban sound that became popular. See: Bob Riesman, *I Feel So Good: The Life and Times of Big Bill Broonzy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011; 2011, Print.

22. This may be a reference to Botkin's daughter Dorothy.

23. Founded by Jessie Daniel Ames in 1930, this organization campaigned against the lynching of black Americans. A common defense of lynchings during the time was as a measure to protect white women. Ames and her organization denounced this notion and other forms of Southern chivalry that was demeaning to women. See: Henry E. Barber, "The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," *Phylon*, 34 December 1973. See also: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Jessie Daniel Ames," in *American Reformers*, ed. Alden Whitman New York: Wilson, 1985. See also: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

24. Botkin is noting the complexity and nuance that is present when looking at the contextual surroundings of culture. Rather than a black-and-white answer, such as

Dorson's claim that something is lost, there is both positive and negative change in Botkin's view.