

CHAPTER I

TALKIN' TO MYSELF AGAIN

A Dialogue on the Evolution of the Blues



It is unlikely that [the blues] will survive through the imitations of the young white college copyists, the 'urban blues singers' whose relation to the blues is that of the 'Trad' jazz band to the music of New Orleans: sterile and derivative. The bleak prospect is that the blues probably has no real future; that folk music that it is, it served its purpose and flourished whilst it had meaning in the Negro community. At the end of the century it may well be seen as an important cultural phenomenon – and someone will commence a systematic study of it, too late.

(Paul Oliver)¹

Me: Remember when blues historians were all worried about the blues surviving the rock era?

Myself: Absolutely. Paul Oliver actually said he didn't think that the blues would survive through the 1960s. The way he saw it, the blues was essentially rooted in time and place – a variety of folk music indigenous to the post-reconstruction American South. In that unique context the music served an essential social function within its community of origin. Removed from that cultural context the blues is severed from its essence, resulting in music that is at best merely 'sterile and derivative.'

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Me: Shows how much they knew! Check it out – we’re now ten years into the twenty-first century and it’s quite apparent that the blues has survived, thrived, and arrived. And I mean *ARRIVED!*

Myself: Wait a minute. Just *what* do you mean, ‘arrived’?

Me: Well, just look around. Blues is big global biz – maybe not *quite* as big as hip-hop, or the NBA, but no less global, and pretty damn big. The blues is everywhere now! The blues has its own ‘Oscars,’ or ‘Grammys.’ The Blues Foundation, like the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences in Hollywood, hosts an annual Blues Music Awards ceremony and banquet (formerly the W. C. Handy Awards) drawing thousands of visitors from all over the world to Memphis, Tennessee. And they sponsor an annual international talent search, attracting entrants from far and wide: Australia, Canada, Croatia, France, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, and all fifty US states. Blues tourism is now a growth industry in the Mississippi Delta and beyond. Nowadays you can go on a Caribbean Blues Cruise – a floating week-long round-the-clock blues festival aboard an eleven-deck five-star cruise-ship – stopping in Aruba, Curacao, St. Barts, and other exotic vacation destinations. And look here! There is even now a recognized academic specialty in blues scholarship. By the time you get a book of philosophical essays published about the blues, under the Wiley-Blackwell imprint, no less, the blues has, like I said, *ARRIVED!*

Myself: Well, if that’s what you mean by ‘arrived,’ what do mean by ‘thrived’ and ‘survived’?

Me: Well, isn’t the blues ‘thriving’ as commerce?

Myself: Depends on who you ask. I know a lot of players can’t get a gig and others can’t keep a band together because of blues clubs and festivals closing down all over the place or changing their format to something more ‘contemporary.’ Did you know that the San Francisco Blues Festival, the longest running blues festival anywhere, shut down two years ago for economic reasons? And lots of smaller regional festivals have had to do the same, and in this economy...

I: Look, in the twenty-first century the whole music industry is in deep turmoil. At this point, none of the old business models seem viable even short-term. So what’s the point of debating the commercial viability of one particular genre of music?

Myself: Okay. Let’s skip the economics. But the still deeper question, about ‘survival,’ remains whether commercially successful ‘blues’ is really blues. Go ahead and assume that the blues *has* been successfully



commercialized. How does it survive that transformation *as blues*? Isn't successfully commercialized blues essentially 'dead on arrival'?

Me: I hope you're not assuming some sort of radical incompatibility between the blues and show business success. Surely you're not going to discredit B. B. King because he made it from the chitlin' circuit to the world stage and his own chain of nightclubs!

Myself: Don't trivialize the point. B. B.'s career speaks for itself. I'd say the same for Buddy Guy – these are two good (indeed *exceptional*) examples of bluesmen surviving and thriving. But that's the point. These are the *exceptions* that prove the rule. There's a huge difference between B. B. King's Beale Street Blues Club in Memphis or Buddy Guy's Legends in Chicago and, for example, the national corporate chain known as the House of Blues.

Me: Specifically?

Myself: Well, for starters, look at the locations. It makes sense for Buddy Guy to have his own club in Chicago, and for B. B. King to erect a shrine to the blues on Beale Street in Memphis. But what's up with the House of Blues on Disneyland Avenue in Anaheim (smells like a theme park to me) and the Boardwalk in Atlantic City (smells even worse: like a casino)? Then look at the ownership structure, if you want to get more deeply into it. The House of Blues chain is part of Live Nation, arguably now the world's largest global entertainment conglomerate, controlling events, concert tours, festivals, and the largest venues in major markets all over the world (and now ticket distribution, including scalping – what a racket!). Music, monster trucks, golf – they don't care. They promote anything! If you can draw a crowd, they'll promote it. And now that they own the House of Blues, do you really think it's a chain of blues clubs anymore, *if* it ever was? Just check out the music lineup. Maybe it includes *some* blues, but damn few and far between! The concert listings are dominated by Live Nation touring acts, just as you'd expect: Anvil, Nickelback, Killswitch Engage, Timbaland. C'mon! No disrespect to Anvil or anybody, but it ain't the blues or even close! House of *Blues*?! They've got their 'blues' logo plastered all over their useless schwag – it's got nothing whatsoever to do with the blues. It's nothing but a corporate entertainment franchise operation sloppily copping a 'blues-theme,' very much in the mold of the Hard Rock Café (which makes *some* sense, by the way – the same entrepreneur, one Isaac Tigrett, started both). That's commercialization for you: completely devoid of soul.

Me: Slow down, man! You're getting carried away. Whatever Live Nation may be doing with it now, that's not how the House of Blues



started out, and Live Nation would never have been interested in acquiring the House of Blues if the latter hadn't demonstrated that there's a viable commercial market for the blues.

Myself: I'm not so sure. Live Nation seems bent on global domination and ready to gobble up whatever they can use and whatever stands in their way, regardless. But let's talk about the origins of the House of Blues. The first House of Blues opened in Harvard Square (!) in 1992. Tigrett's original partner in the venture was Canadian comedian Dan Aykroyd, of *Saturday Night Live* fame. Aykroyd and his *Saturday Night Live* co-star John Belushi had developed two characters: the Blues Brothers – two white guys fronting a blues band. Belushi, as 'Jolliett Jake' Blues, was the singer (imagine Belushi's samurai warrior character dressed like a Chicago hit man in shades with a microphone). Aykroyd, in matching outfit, as Elwood Blues, played harmonica. What began as a comedy sketch and then developed into a running gag was so successful (popular) that within a couple of years Belushi and Aykroyd had rounded up a backup band of A-list Memphis session musicians, had recorded and released a full-length album (*Briefcase Full of Blues*), and had a script for a Hollywood feature-length comedy in production (*The Blues Brothers*, 1980). They even opened a bar in Chicago called *The Blues Brothers Bar*. The bar didn't have an actual liquor license so it got shut down pretty quickly, but there's your prototype. And there you have it: the original House of Blues – a spin-off of a successful comedy act about a couple of white guys fronting a blues band.

Me: Now look who's trivializing. The impulses behind the original House of Blues were complex, not simply comedic. And it's worth noting that the comedic impulses animating the Blues Brothers as comic personae have more than a little complexity and depth as well. Aykroyd was a committed blues fan from his high school and college days in Ottawa, where he got to hear all the great touring bluesmen of the 1950s and early 1960s: Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, James Cotton, Junior Wells, Buddy Guy. He even jammed with Muddy Waters. Aykroyd turned Belushi on to the blues, and Belushi grew to be a committed blues fan himself, his interest growing deeper through his encounters with Curtis Salgado and Robert Cray during the production of *National Lampoon's Animal House* in the late 1970s in Eugene, Oregon (Cray wound up appearing as the bass player in the band that performs as 'Otis Day and the Knights' in the roadhouse and frat-house party scenes). So both Aykroyd and Belushi got some serious schooling in the blues from some



pretty unimpeachable sources. And, if you look closely you begin to see that what the Blues Brothers were *really* making fun of was *themselves* as white guys getting into the blues.

Myself: I love it when people make my point for me. See, we're back to Paul Oliver's bleak assessment of the future of the blues. Aykroyd and Belushi are just part of a cultural process in which the blues is simultaneously appropriated, exploited, and left behind. I suppose it's nice, even somewhat 'redeeming,' that these guys were able to make fun of themselves and of their own role in that process.

Me: But you're now talking as though the blues can be neatly separated and distinguished from what you call the 'process' of commercial appropriation and exploitation. Don't forget: all the great blues singers took part in that process. In the 1930s weren't they expanding their audiences through recordings and radio performances? In the 1960s weren't they playing college towns and folk festivals, reaching new generations of fans? Then didn't they go to the West Coast and play the Fillmore, and open for the Stones in Europe, expanding their audiences even further? You can see these same processes at work all the way back to 1903 with W. C. Handy, who transcribed the blues for sale as sheet music. So what exactly is it about these processes that you see as being especially in need of 'redemption'? Is it the commerce, or the roles and racial identities of those involved in it?

Myself: Both! The black bluesmen and women that performed on the radio, made recordings, and went out on tours were generally being exploited commercially by businesses controlled mostly by white people.

I: I thought we were going to skip the economics, but apparently not. Do you sense the discussion expanding to greater and greater levels of complexity? We're now confronting not only the economics and business ethics of the entertainment industry and the arts but also the complexities of American history and race in the even larger context of the Heraclitean flux of culture formation, and...

Me and Myself [in shocked unison]: What the... ?!

I: ... how can we even *begin* to comprehend the massive network of dynamic forces (economic, social, political, and more) constantly shaping culture at any moment in time and place? Don't you wonder where to find *any* reliable standard for predicting and assessing the trajectory of a culture and its contents? Who was it that said, when asked for an opinion about the future of jazz, 'If I knew where jazz was going, I'd be there already'?

Myself: Trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton said that.



Me: But what was that hurricane cluster flap, or whatever that was you said? What *are* you talking about?

I: Heraclitus: the Greek philosopher who held that everything is always changing (in flux). He's the source of that famous saying that you can't step twice into the same river. So, isn't culture a lot like a river – always flowing and changing, affecting and affected by everything with which it comes in contact?

Me: Okay. So we get the metaphor.

Myself: But where are you headed with it?

I: Well, suppose we consider the blues as a cultural phenomenon, something that arises as part of what we call culture. As such the blues is 'alive,' constantly changing and developing – that is, of course, until it 'dies.' Now, how do you tell whether the blues is living or dying? How *do* you determine which changes and developments constitute continuations or extensions of the blues as a living tradition and which ones constitute departures from or betrayals of that tradition? And doesn't it get more complicated and difficult with each new generation of change and development?

Me: How about an example?

I: Okay. Here's one. When Muddy Waters moved from Mississippi to Chicago, it wasn't long before he was playing amplified electric guitar and surrounded by a full band. That was a change, a development. And he was playing to audiences of factory workers in an urban nightclub, instead of sharecroppers in a Delta juke joint. That's a change, more development. Does anyone wonder whether the blues is surviving through *these* changes?

Me: Not me.

I: Now take the example a step further. By 1969 Muddy was playing in larger and more opulent venues spread out across the United States and overseas. He was playing to larger and younger crowds, including more and more white people. And he made an album for Chess Records entitled *Fathers and Sons*, now surrounded by a full band including three white guys: Paul Butterfield, Michael Bloomfield, and Donald 'Duck' Dunn (who also played bass behind the Blues Brothers). These are the guys Paul Oliver is talking about as having a 'sterile and derivative' relationship to the blues. More change, more development; but now doubts are being raised about whether the blues will survive.

Myself: Well, the obvious difference is the growing presence of white people in the picture – a difference that *makes* a difference to how the



music is made, presented, received, and understood, and, of course, to how it is treated commercially.

Me: How long are we going to stay bogged down in this tired old debate over white people and blues ‘authenticity’? That’s so twentieth century!²

Myself: The debate may be ‘old’ and ‘tired’ but it’s far from settled. And if you only look you’ll see this very same debate raging right in the middle of the twenty-first-century hip-hop wars.³

Me: If you ask me, the fact that this tired old debate is now raging around hip-hop shows that the music is evolving but not the debate.

I: Then you’re not studying the debate closely enough. The debate over the authenticity issue has indeed continued to evolve – mostly in the direction of greater complexity, just like the issues (of race and racism) that continue to animate it.⁴

Myself: I don’t see what’s so ‘complex.’ Look, you can go to any city (or area of suburban sprawl) in America right now and find the local ‘blues society,’ which will almost inevitably be a sort of amateur musicians’ ‘bowling league’ populated by aging white people who sell insurance for a living and have a ‘band room’ in their garage where they think up formulaic band names like ‘Hardhat Harry the Home-Wreckers’ and play endless lame versions of ‘Sweet Home Chicago’ and (gag) ‘Mustang Sally.’ What a caricature!

Me: What you just said is a caricature. You should remember who you’re talking to! And choose your words carefully. You’re talking about *me*, you know!

I: Can we clear the air in here? It’s getting a little funky. You know, usually there’s *some* truth in caricature – also oversimplification and selective exaggeration. Now, would you like to know what I mean by ‘complexity?’

Me: Suits me.

Myself: Speak for yourself.

I: Alright, first tell me what we’re talking about.

Me: The evolution of the blues?

Myself: More like the ‘evolution’ of the ‘blues’ (choosing my words carefully).

I: Oh, goody! A subtle distinction! Now, scare quotes or not, in order to understand what it is we’re talking about, do we or don’t we need a definition of ‘the blues?’

Me: Question: We’re talking about the music (not the feeling), right?

I: As you wish.



Myself: Question: Supposing that we're talking about the music, are we talking about it in the sense that musicians use the term, or the sense used in the marketing end of the music industry (because they're not the same)?

I: Again, as you wish.

Myself: Well, this is already kind of confusing, because a musician might say something like 'Okay, let's play a medium blues shuffle in 'A' with a quick four starting from the five,' and what they would mean by 'blues' is a song structure based on a twelve-bar chord progression in one of several standard variations. But, if you go on iTunes, 'blues' turns up as a genre category second from the top (right between 'alternative' and 'children's music'). And if you browse around in this category you're going to find a whole lot of music that doesn't fit that structure or *any* of its standard or even non-standard variations.

Me: That's because the iTunes category is organized on the basis of the blues canon, and the reason that musicians use the more restrictive meaning is for convenience. It's a kind of shorthand for one of the central conventional song forms in the canon.

I: So, it seems that what we've been arguing about is how to specify the blues canon, and how the blues canon may or may not evolve?

Me and Myself [in surprised unison]: Exactly!

[three-beat pause]

Myself: Having positioned myself as a 'conservative' in defense of the blues canon, I must confess now that it seems a little odd to be speaking of a 'blues canon,' and even to utter the words. I mean, suddenly I'm struck by the paradox of being invested in the 'canonical' status of 'old school' blues.

Me: Can you explain that? I'm not so sure I follow you.

Myself: Well, 'canon' comes from medieval Catholic scholasticism, and...

Me: Right! Talk about 'old school'!

Myself: ... and originally it meant a kind of ecclesiastical rule or law based on the officially authorized holy texts – the texts that the priesthood had 'authenticated' as coming from God. Then that concept got imported into more modern secular disciplines of scholarship. But it still carries most of that weighty freight of official authority. So, for example in the study of English literature you get the distinction between the 'canonical' works of Shakespeare, meaning the texts that the expert literary scholars have decided were actually written by him and are thus 'authentic,' and the 'apocryphal works,' meaning the 'inauthentic' or



‘spurious’ imitations. And furthermore you get the notion of an English literary canon, meaning the Great Books list of literary works that, again, the expert scholars have decided are the ‘best’ or the ‘most important’ or the ‘most worthy of serious study,’ and are thus understood to definitively establish abiding standards of literary value and taste. You know, the stuff in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. And this makes me cringe a bit.

Me: I still don’t get it, especially coming from you. I mean, look, your guy Paul Oliver is one of the editors of *The New Blackwell Guide to Recorded Blues*, isn’t he?⁵ What is that if not analogous to the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*? Don’t you orient yourself to the blues canon by reference to it?

Myself: Indeed. But what’s now making me cringe is how alien all of this ‘canonization’ business is to ‘old school’ blues (and even mid- to late-twentieth-century blues-rock) and the cultures that produced them.

Me: Maybe you’d feel more comfortable if you adopted a more flexible and ecumenical attitude toward the evolving blues canon. Take Robert Johnson’s ‘Cross Road Blues’ as an example. Surely this has to count as a canonical blues tune! Have you heard John Mayer’s slick new version?⁶ As polished and contemporary as it sounds, you can trace a direct line from there straight back through Eric Clapton’s classic long jam versions with Cream to the original 1936 recording.

Myself: Sorry, but it’s not a very convincing example. The *tune* may belong to the blues canon (still assuming that it makes sense to speak of such a thing), but Mayer’s new version of it is quite another matter. The link to Clapton is obvious. But Clapton’s version(s) belong to the blues-rock guitar canon, not really to the blues canon as such.

Me: But why do you insist on dividing ‘old school’ blues from blues-rock?

Myself: Because they’re different. I rather suspect that Clapton himself would make the same distinction. When he plays the blues canon, which he does from time to time, as for example on *Me and Mr. Johnson*, Clapton is very ‘old school’ in his approach. He’s paying open and faithful homage to the original compositions and recordings.⁷ But with Cream, although he was using blues materials (most famously Robert Johnson’s ‘Crossroads’), Clapton was moving in a whole new musical direction: the guitar-centric rock power trio. The same goes for Jimi Hendrix. Of course, this music could hardly have been conceived without the blues as a foundation, but it is quite distinct from the blues in so many ways, beginning obviously with the shift of



focus from the singer and the lyric to the instrument and its virtuosic manipulation!

Me: Canons to the left of me, canons to the right. And only moments ago one canon was making you cringe.

Myself: It still does seem odd to me to be talking about a blues canon. But given that we are, I still see a clear break between the blues and the psychedelic blues-rock of the 1960s.

I: Do you really mean a ‘clear break’? Or is the relationship more of a ‘branching off’?

Myself: Well, I suppose it’s more of a ‘branching off’ sort of relationship, in that there’s continuity going from psychedelic blues-rock back to the blues roots, but why do you ask?

I: Well, suppose we focus more closely at the ‘crotch’ where the branch is most integrally connected to its root source and is just beginning to develop in its own separate direction. So, for example, how would you want to characterize Clapton’s 1966 version of ‘Crossroads’? I’m referring to the one he recorded for Elektra Records in a one-off band with Steve Winwood called ‘Eric Clapton and the Powerhouse’?⁸ On this recording the ensemble is not a ‘power trio,’ but is structured and behaves rather in the mold of a ‘Chicago blues band.’ Clapton doesn’t even play the solo. The instrumental break is taken by Paul Jones on harmonica. Now, how is this related to the blues canon? Is it blues or is it blues-rock? Is the blues canon evolving or dividing? And, if we are divided over *this* question, are we divided over an ‘aesthetic’ question (‘a matter of taste’)? Or are we divided over a political and moral question (a matter of conscience)? Or both?

Myself: I’m not sure *how* to answer these questions – at least not all of them at once. But suppose we begin by noting something important about the *nature* of a canon: even if canons *do* evolve, this can only be at a slow and stately pace. Otherwise they cease to serve their essential canonical functions.

I: And these are... ?

Myself: Well, it would appear that, if we *are* to have any kind of serious conversation about the blues as an art form, it will inevitably be by reference to a canon. So, I guess a canon is either a pre-condition or an inevitable by-product of the kind of discourse we’re engaging in here and now.

I: That’s an interesting observation, though not entirely decisive, and it leaves the question of essential functions unanswered. Let’s go slowly now. The observation seems to be that the emergence of a canon is a symptom of the phenomenon of academic scholarship. When a *scholarly*



community assembles around a given art form, talk of the canon and the canonical arises. One wonders whether the emergence of a canon is a by-product of the of the advancing evolution of the art form, a symptom of the art form having achieved a level of depth and maturity worthy of serious scholarly attention.

Me: What I'm sayin'!! But don't overlook the possibility that the blues had enough depth and maturity to merit serious attention before the academic scholars started coming around.

Myself: Wait a minute. Didn't academic scholars start coming around about a hundred years ago? Both John and Alan Lomax were academic scholars, and, even before them, there was Howard Odum, who thought of his research as social science. They were all pioneers in the application of emerging audio recording technology to the process of documenting the blues. So, scholarly interest in the blues as an art form is clearly as old as recorded blues.

I: So, is talk of the canon and the canonical with reference to the blues as old as scholarly interest in the blues as an art form or not?

Myself: I'm going to say not, because the first generation of academic scholars to take an interest in the blues as an art form thought of themselves as folklorists, or cultural anthropologists, and thought of the blues in terms remote from those reserved for the discussion of 'literature.' And only in later generations of scholarship – the blues 'revivals' of the 1960s and 1980s – did the blues begin to be assimilated to literature. Then we began to really obsess over the blues canon.

I: So, you're now saying that the emergence of a canon is a symptom of the art form having achieved academic recognition for levels of depth and maturity worthy of serious scholarly attention *as literature*? But now one begins to wonder whether the emergence of a canon is symptomatic of a peculiar need that scholarly communities and their members have for 'foundations' upon which to rest their conflicting claims and assessments of 'literary value'?

Myself: That's *my* worry.

Me: Now *I'm* going to say 'wait a minute.' I think you *can* trace talk of the blues canon (in effect, if not in so many words) all the way back to the first generation of blues scholarship. Or maybe we should say the first and second generation. I'm thinking of the rift that developed between John and Alan Lomax toward the end of the former's life over what properly constitutes folklore. John was apparently quite dismayed when his son Alan undertook to survey the commercially recorded blues that black people were collecting and listening to in the Delta in the 1940s. He thought



what you were supposed to do as a folklorist was to go out and find the ‘pure’ pre-industrial rural music at the source and then record it in the raw for the archives. And John was equally dismayed at how his greatest discovery, Huddie ‘Leadbelly’ Ledbetter, was changed and ‘corrupted’ by exposure to white urban audiences. Leadbelly was apparently getting too heavily invested into ‘showmanship’ for the elder Lomax’s taste.⁹

I: So, do you now see what I mean by ‘complexity’?

Me: I think I’m *beginning* to.

Myself: At least in the sense that I’m somewhat confused about where we are in the discussion.

I: Well, that’s not too bad. At least it’s honest. So, what do we think about this year’s new crop of blues albums? I’m thinking in particular of one of the most surprising, Cyndi Lauper’s *Memphis Blues*.¹⁰

Myself: Well, I think it’s doubtful that it will be nominated for a Blues Music Award.

Me: I agree, but what does that indicate about the Blues Music Awards and the Blues Foundation – institutions that some would argue are too heavily invested in the past to recognize (or even allow) the evolution of the blues as a living art-form? You can hear the critics sharpening their knives, writing Cyndi Lauper off as just another shape-shifting publicity-seeking pop icon, trying to compete with Madonna and Lady Gaga by projecting a blues diva avatar, and so on, before they even listen to the record.

Myself: And what does all of this indicate about the future of the blues, the question Paul Oliver raised back in the 1960s?

I: Hard to say (in advance). Even the past keeps looking different with each passing season.¹¹ A lot depends on what we bring to the music. I really like how Mike Mattison – the vocalist in Derek Trucks’ band (a band that is really stretching and extending the blues, and, despite winning the contemporary blues Grammy, is yet to be recognized by the Blues Music Awards) – put it when he said on behalf of the band, ‘The now-popular conception of blues is that it’s niche music, old people’s music. But like any Southern band worth its salt, the Derek Trucks Band knows that the blues are the fount of American music itself – and that’s how we treat it.’¹²

NOTES

- 1 Paul Oliver, ‘The future of the blues: Looking back at looking forward,’ in *Blues Off The Record: Thirty Years of Blues Commentary* (Tunbridge Wells, UK: Baton Press, 1984), pp. 285–289.



- 2 Cf. Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), *Blues People* (New York: William Morrow, 1954); Ralph J. Gleason, 'Can the white man sing the blues?' *Jazz and Pop* (August 1968), p. 28. My critique of these arguments was published as 'Race, ethnicity, expressive authenticity: Can white people play the blues?' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52 (1994), pp. 127–137. See also the exchange in Paul C. Taylor, 'So black and blue: Response to Rudinow' and Joel Rudinow, 'Reply to Taylor' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 53 (1995): pp. 313–317. For an update on my position, see Joel Rudinow, *Soul Music: The Spiritual Roots of Pop from Plato to Motown* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), Chapter 6.
- 3 Cf. Michael Eric Dyson, *Know What I Mean? Reflections on Hip-Hop* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007).
- 4 Complementing a growing literature in what is known as 'race formation theory,' an emerging field of 'whiteness studies' is now gaining respectful attention. See, for example, Crispin Sartwell, *Act Like You Know: African-American Autobiography and White Identity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Rich Benjamin, *Searching for Whitopia* (New York: Hyperion, 2009); and Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: Norton, 2010). For a review of the latter two titles, see Kelefa Sanneh, 'Beyond the pale: Is white the new black?' *The New Yorker* (April 12, 2010), pp. 69–74.
- 5 John Cowley and Paul Oliver (Eds.), *The New Blackwell Guide to Recorded Blues* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).
- 6 John Mayer, *Battle Studies* (Columbia Records, 2009); see also Cream, *Wheels of Fire, Disc 2: Live at the Fillmore* (Polydor, 1968).
- 7 Eric Clapton, *Me and Mr. Johnson* (Reprise, 2004); see also *Sessions for Robert J* (Reprise, 2004).
- 8 Eric Clapton and the Powerhouse, 'Crossroads,' *What's Shakin'* (Elektra Records, 1966).
- 9 See Marybeth Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues: Black Voices, White Visions* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), pp. 114–124.
- 10 Cyndi Lauper, *Memphis Blues* (Mercer Street Records, 2010), with guest performances by B. B. King, Jonny Lang, Charlie Musselwhite, Ann Peebles, and Allen Toussaint. Lauper dedicated the album to Ma Rainey, channeling Tracy Nelson.
- 11 See Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 8–9.
- 12 The Derek Trucks Band, *Roadsongs* (SONY Masterworks, 2010).

