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“Tiger Rag” and its Sources: New Interpretive Perspectives

Vincenzo Caporaletti

Aside from being one of the most often recorded compositions¹ in the history of jazz, “Tiger Rag” is certainly among the most controversial ones in terms of authorship and philological identification of motivic sources. Its composer and copyright holder², Italian-American cornetist Dominick James “Nick” La Rocca (1889-1961), first recorded it in 1917 with the Original Dixieland Jass Band (ODJB)³ quintet from New Orleans. Often falsified by conflicting data within its literature, the complex royalties affair for “Tiger Rag” calls for further clarification. Its first copyright dates back to May 12th, 1917, under Max Hart’s name, from New York⁴. Leo Feist, who took care of the legal deposit on September 8th, 1917⁵, was the first to publish it on paper for the collection entitled *Latest Vocal and Instrumental Music*. Max Hart, at the time impresario for the ODJB – his son, Lorenz Hart, was to achieve notoriety for his accomplishments as author and librettist with Richard Rodgers – had taken care of the legal deposit under his own name for other pieces also composed and performed by the New Orleans

¹ Until 1942, we can count up to 136 recordings of “Tiger Rag”; “St. Louis Blues” was the only composition to be recorded more often than “Tiger Rag”. Cf. Richard Crawford and Jeffrey Magee, *Jazz Standards On Record 1900-1942: A Core Repertory*, Chicago, Columbia College, Center for Black Music Research, 1992, p. x.

² It is necessary here to go back to the complex issue of the authorship of “Tiger Rag”, frequently flawed in the literature by clashing dates. The first copyright of the tune is dated May 12, 1917 and shows the name of Max Hart, from New York (*Catalog of Copyright Entries*, 1917, Music, First Half of 1917, New Series, Vol. 12, part 1, Washington, Library of Congress, 8535, E403137). The first publisher of paper hard copies was Leo Feist, who makes a legal deposit in the collection *Latest Vocal and Instrumental Music*, including the tune, September 18, 1917 (*Catalog of Copyright Entries*, 1917, Music, New Series, Vol. 12, part 3, Washington, Library of Congress, 14818, E407792). Max Hart, then ODJB’s agent, and his son Lorenz Hart – about to become the well-known author and librettist, Richard Rodgers’ collaborator – have too made a legal deposit in their own name, as well of other tunes composed and played by the New Orleans band, as “Ostrich Walk”, “Barnyard Blues”, “Dixieland Jazz Band [One-Step]” and “Sensation [Rag]”. It’s only after the passing of Hart in the end of the 1920s, that La Rocca could bring back the property of the copyright. That is how they were conferred in a single member way and that the economic gains continued to be regularly divided on the basis of former agreements between Original Dixieland Jazz Band’s members (this circumstance has been told in Harry O. Brunn, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, Louisiana State University Press, 1960, p. 231, and confirmed in Samuel Charters, *A Trumpet Around The Corner. The Story Of New Orleans Jazz*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2008, p. 151). With the membership of La Rocca in the *American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers* (ASCAP), in 1937, former agreements are impaired in his favour, cristallized in the prolongation of the legal deposit up to 1943, what should provoke disagreements of considerable proportions between ODJB’s members, (see H.O. Brunn, *The Story...*, p. 245).

³ Original Dixieland Jass Band (henceforth ODJB) [Nick La Rocca (cornet), Larry Shields (clarinet), Eddie Edwards (trombone), Henry Ragas (piano), Tony Sbarbaro (drums)], “Tiger Rag”, Aeolian/Vocalion B-1206 record, New York, August 17th, 1917. It is yet to be established with certainty when the spelling for “jazz” took over the term “jass” in the way the band and the compositions were named. Such a gradual process lasted a few months, with discrepancies between and among record labels, manifestos and documents regarding the legal deposit. The first print, which Leo Feist published on September 1917 in New York, presents the term “jazz”, as well as written records of the copyright for the first piece recorded by the ODJB, “Dixie Land Jazz Band–One Step” [sic], on April 9th, 1917. We may therefore reasonably claim that credit is due to Max Hart for the change in spelling.

⁴ *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, 1917, Music, First Half of 1917, New Series, Vol. 12, part 1, Washington, Library of Congress, 8535, E403137.

⁵ *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, 1917, Music, New Series, Vol. 12, part 3, Washington, Library of Congress, 14818, E407792.

band such as “Ostrich Walk”, “Barnyard Blues”, “Dixieland Jazz Band [One-Step]” and “Sensation [Rag]”; it was only after his passing, towards the end of the Twenties, that La Rocca was entitled to its copyright directly attributed to him specifically under his name though dues were regularly distributed, on the basis of prior agreements, among members of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band⁶. Once La Rocca became member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) in 1937, prior agreements went through restrictions in his favor, further clarified through renewal of the legal deposit in 1943. Such a state of affairs caused considerable tensions among the members of the ODJB⁷.

A number of musicians have contested this authorial reference, first and foremost among these pianist and composer Ferdinand Joseph LaMothe (Jelly Roll Morton) (1890-1941) who claimed authorship for this composition on numerous occasions⁸. In my own recent research, I have examined this complex dispute⁹ not only in purely musical terms but also through analysis of evidence provided by the Creole pianist’s accounts. This has led me to disprove his thesis and substantially confirm La Rocca’s authorship. At the same time, in light of socio-anthropological considerations, I have sought to emphasize such contradictions as were embedded in such «compelling»¹⁰ conclusions. From this point of view, the issue takes on other connotations in its disclosure as an epiphenomenon of a series of dynamics generated by shifts from traditional oral culture to audiotactile and neo-auratic¹¹ cognition - and having done so within an anthropological horizon characterized by the early twentieth century rise of mass culture. In terms of intellectual property and textual clarification of recordings, Nick La Rocca clearly formalized a series of practices, expressions, and true “traveling motifs”¹² making up the New Orleans musicians’ collective heritage between the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Through this cultural process, this Italian-American musician had distanced himself from the anonymous dignity of the oral “culture bearer”, attaining such an inconceivable authorial status, unheard of at the time, for a musically illiterate person. By the same token, he had taken a collective good away from the New Orleans jazz community, thus justifying a lot more than Jelly Roll Morton’s public redress in a scenario overstepping the threshold of contingencies related to specific authorial credit - thereby granting access to the dynamics of a dramatic socio-anthropological shift.

Discussion of accurate philological determination of these motivic units and of the harmonic structures employed for the creation of “Tiger Rag”, however, is still open. By tracing a

⁶ For an account of such circumstances, see Harry O. Brunn, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, Louisiana State University Press, 1960, p. 231, and for its substantiation, see Samuel Charters, *A Trumpet Around The Corner. The Story Of New Orleans Jazz*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2008, p. 151.

⁷ Cf. H. O. Brunn, *The Story*, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁸ Credit for the critical edition of the interview and related musical performances is due to Jeffrey A. Greenberg and Anna Lomax Wood (eds.), *Jelly Roll Morton, The Complete Library Of Congress Recordings*, CD Box Rounder 11661-1555-2G01, 2005.

⁹ Vincenzo Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton, the “Old Quadrille” and “Tiger Rag”. A Historiographic Revision*, Lucca, LIM, 2011.

¹⁰ According to Bruce Boyd Raeburn, curator for the “William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz” of Tulane University in New Orleans (Preface, *ibid.*, p. 49).

¹¹ As far as the notions of audiotactile formativity and neo-auratic cognition are concerned, let me refer readers to Vincenzo Caporaletti, *I processi improvvisativi nella musica. Un approccio globale*, Lucca, LIM, 2005; *Swing e Groove. Sui fondamenti estetici delle musiche audiotattili*, Lucca, LIM, 2014. As for the specific discussion of “Tiger Rag”, cf. V. Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹² By “traveling motifs”, I mean melodies by unknown or forgotten authors circulating within the jazz community as material for creative practices. Aleksander Nicolaevič Veselovskij introduced this concept in relation to folk repertoires of tales and oral epic narratives. In line with the context being dealt with here, such a concept corresponds to the notion of floating folk strains (cf. David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime*, New York, The Seabury Press, 1978, p. 22).

few original interpretive lines, this essay seeks to clarify the terms of this intricate set of issues intimately interconnected with authorship.

“Tiger Rag”’s structural scheme

Leading the discussion of sources requires that we establish the composition’s morphology at a macro-architectonic level. This implies clarifying the formalization criteria according to a taxonomy elaborated back in 2011¹³. Anthropology teaches how, as a rule, and even more so in its musical applications, an outsider’s parameter of cultural classification never coincides with an insider’s¹⁴. The paradigmatic significance of such a postulate for all research on “Tiger Rag” is such that, in order to find one’s way along the intricacies of the informants’ historical accounts (oral reviews mainly going back to mid-twentieth century relating events occurred fifty years before) potentially identifying the composition’s precursors, a clear distinction must be set between segmentation as derivative of conventional music theory and the ethno-theories which a significant number of New Orleans musicians enacted. One must therefore take into account both La Rocca’s lack of formal music training as well as all the other informants’ contributions through interviews about such matters. These facts must also be kept in mind when interpreting claims related to the piece’s structural traits and to all prior motivic-melodic references¹⁵. For proper philological analysis to be initiated, our own effort will indeed be oriented towards culturally reconciling criteria and ethno-theoretical designations with Western music theory.

“Tiger Rag” is a multi-sectional composition, with a formal scheme deriving from ragtime style (whose form derives, in turn, from march tunes of European written music). Tab. 1 schematizes its structure, with sectional segmentation and related metric extension, key and tempo. Here we find three 32-measure sections (**1**, **2**, **3**), with relative 8-measure sub-sections **1a**, **1b**; **2a**, **2b** are 16 measures in length, and the varied sections **3x**, **3y**, **3z**, are each 32 measures long. The critical edition of the retrospective score for the recording of “Tiger Rag”, which the ODJB performed under Nick La Rocca’s direction¹⁶ on March 25th, 1918, is acknowledged as the composition’s reference text.

¹³ V. Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton, op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁴ For a critical excursus on this topic, cf. Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology. Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2005, p. 249.

¹⁵ This does not in any way imply that musicians from New Orleans weren’t entirely encultured in terms of formal musical codes: European musical culture was fairly widespread and, in particular, «[...] Creoles studied with musicians of the French opera house and with scores of itinerant Latin American and European conservatory-trained performers», Thomas Fiehrer, “From Quadrille to Stomp: The Creole Origins of Jazz”, *Popular Music*, X, Gen. 1991, p. 21-38 (p. 28). See also David Chevan, *Written Music in Early Jazz*, Ph.D. Diss., New York, City University of New York, 1997.

¹⁶ David Baker (ed.), *Tiger Rag (Hold That Tiger), Essential Jazz Editions Set n. 1: New Orleans Jazz, 1918-192- Full Score*, Washington, Smithsonian Museum of American History and Library of Congress, EJE 9904, 1999. The ODJB recorded this piece in New York on March 25th, 1918, Victor Talking Machine Co. 18472. The choice for this version’s critical edition (which turns out to be, melodically and harmonically, strikingly similar to the August 17th, 1917 original: in the present study we shall consider them to be equivalent) may be accounted for, I believe, either in terms of the recording’s undeniably superior acoustic quality or a much wider distribution in the market. Indeed, the 1917 recording for the Aeolian-Vocalion company – Aeolian’s phonograph division, well-known for manufacturing player pianos – was published on obsolete record supports involving vertical recording track decoding (*vertical cut*) as opposed to the gramophone technology featuring horizontal track decoding which, in those years, had set the market’s standards. Given the circumstances, their circulation was indeed very much impeded. Cf. Steve Sullivan, *Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recordings*, Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2013, p. 268.

1a	1a	1b	1a	2a	2b	3x	3y	3z	3x
8 measures	8	8	8	16	16	32	32	32	32
Bb Maj.		F Maj.	Bb Maj.	Eb Maj.	Ab Maj.				
123 bpm									

Table 1. ODJB, “Tiger Rag”, New York, August 17th, 1917. Structural/processual scheme

As the sections’ harmonic scheme and their relationships show (cf. Fig. 1; motivic aspects will be discussed *below*), exact disposition of tonal schemes is certainly one of the most relevant factors.

I		V	I			V	I
---	--	---	---	--	--	---	---

[Sub-section 1a] Key of Bb major

V	I	V	I	V	I	V	I
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

[Sub-section 1b] Key of F major

I						V	
V		I		II7		V	

[Sub-section 2a]

V		I		V		I	
V		I		IV	II7	V	I7

[Sub-section 2b]

Section 2 – Key of Eb major

I						V	
V						I	
I				I7		IV	
IV		I	VI7	II7	V	I	(V)

Section 3 – Key of Ab major

Figure 1. “Tiger Rag”’s metric-harmonic structures (one square = one 2/4 measure)

Scientific literature

First of all, we need to assess recent accomplishments in this kind of research. What do we know and what is still missing in the overall picture? Aside from a series of scattered (an)notations spread within it, the scientific reference text is the already quoted critical edition¹⁷. Among the many contributions worth noting in this particular reference edition is the way Jack Stewart’s philological editing of sources of “Tiger Rag” divides the composition into segments, basically following the indications, taken from Brunn 1960¹⁸, which La Rocca himself had

¹⁷ David Baker (ed.), *Tiger Rag*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Jack Stewart’s philological note (“Tiger Rag”, in D. Baker (ed.), *Tiger Rag*, *op. cit.*, p. 4), however, is somewhat baffling. His study relies on La Rocca’s indications taken directly from H. O. Brunn, *The Story*, *op. cit.* (Stewart leaves out the numbers for pages 94-95). Brunn’s book, however, turns out to be a secondary source with no *verbatim* reference to La Rocca’s very own claims published elsewhere in Italian (Dominick La Rocca, “Tiger Rag”, *Jazz di ieri e di oggi*, VI, June 1960, p. 30) and in English, in November of the same year (Edison B. Allen and Nick LaRocca, “How “Tiger Rag” Was Composed”, *International Musician*, vol. LIX, V, November 1960, p. 12). It is worthwhile quoting the Italian-American musician’s whole account from *International Musician*: «How could a self-taught cornetist

provided. It also ought to be specified that, in this text, Jack Stewart gives much credit to the pro-La Rocca authorial thesis prior to our 2011¹⁹ publication which, as already pointed out, contests Morton’s version on the basis of objective, accounted for evidence; this is the reason why, I believe, Stewart assesses Brunn’s reconstruction with a laconic «rings true»²⁰. For the sake of comparison, we shall quote this analysis in its entirety, marking in square brackets every match with the composition’s segmentation proposed here.

This arrangement has a 32-bar verse in C major, m. 1-32. It uses the “get over dirty” phrase and a complementary phrase repeated in a slightly modulated manner to make an eight-bar sequence. **[1a]**

This sequence is repeated with a slight variation. **[1a]**

This is followed by eight bars taken note for note from Schubert’s Sixteen German Dances, Op. 33. **[1b]**

The fourth and final part is another eight-bar variation similar to parts one and two. **[1a]**

The second major section, m. 33-64, changes into F major and starts with two bars of what Brunn probably referred to as the London Bridge theme in stop time, followed by a two-bar break; this sequence is repeated once. **[2a]**

Next is a two-bar fanfare and then another four-bar variation of London Bridge. This section closes with an eight-bar riff “melody” and another eight-bar variation on it. **[2b]**

The trio section, of 128 bars, m. 65-192, changes into B-flat major and starts with a 32-bar “melody”, m. 65-96, with the same chords used in National Emblem (1906), Bill Bailey (1902), Washington and Lee Swing (1910), and many others. **[3x, 3y, 3z, 3x]**²¹

Beyond philological criteria – and Stewart’s citation of tonalities transposed for *B flat* instruments instead of the actual ones – the substance of his analysis is far from convincing. Aside from referring to the claims made by La Rocca-Brunn (for **1a, 2a, 2b, 3x, 3y, 3z**), he points to other sources (for sub-section **1b**) with no supporting evidence. It seems peculiar, however, to

like “Nick” LaRocca not only play, but compose, many of the most popular offerings of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, like “Tiger Rag”? He explains to E. B. Allen: “I’ll tell you how “Tiger Rag” came about. A man who’s self-taught has only a limited amount of material to draw on. He gets different ideas and then he tries to put them together. Now they needn’t dispute me on this. I constructed the number; I should know where I got the music. I knew only the tunes of my childhood days, and other tunes which I incorporated in tunes which were to follow. “Tiger Rag” begins with an ending I always made to my numbers, with a few little notes added. It’s a piece of tango. When people bothered me too much, I’d blow these few little notes at them and they meant “get over, dirty”, just like “where did you get that hat?” As for the second part, it’s “London Bridge Is Falling Down” but in stop time ... The trio is nothing but the chord construction of “National Emblem March”, by Sousa [recte Edwin Eugene Bagley (1857-1922) N.d.A] □ ‘Oh, the monkey wrapped his tail around the flagpole’ [...] If you take this, and put rhythms against it, you’ll see it’s nothing but the chord construction of the march, with two beats syncopated. Another part comes from the old German bands in New Orleans that used to play their “um-pa, um-pa’. But you make those notes used as background by brass behind clarinet, and you get this part of “Tiger Rag”. Some people have tried to say that this tune came from a French quadrille. Others claim it was being played under different names around New Orleans long before I put it together. But I dispute all of these people and I never heard any such quadrille.”» (*ibid.*) We must keep in mind, however, that in an even earlier interview going back to two years before, recorded by William Allen on May 21st, 1958, kept in the Hogan Jazz Archive of Tulane University, New Orleans (La Rocca Interview, HJA 5-21-1958, Reel 1), the cornetist provides evidence for, with a piano performance, the piece’s connection with the second theme’s harmonic structure of the “National Emblem March”.

¹⁹ V. Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton, op. cit.*

²⁰ J. Stewart, “Tiger Rag”, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*

be indicating the title of a collection (Franz Schubert's Op. 33) without specifying the piece and the exact *locus* it is supposed to refer to. Upon closer examination of Franz Schubert's [D 783 in Otto Deutsch's catalogue] "Sixteen German Dances" Op. 33, we find no evidence of a «note for note» sample other than a rather vague, hardly relevant similarity of the first three notes from the "Dance n. 1" with the rhythmic *ostinato* in section **3y** (bearing no relation whatsoever with melodic, intervallic, and tonal elements) and with a melodic fragment, in measure one of the second section of "Dance n. 2", with a passage of sub-section **2b**. Such resemblances are entirely casual and hardly relevant²².

The composition's segmentation in its overall shape, however, is especially problematic and leads to poor interpretations of La Rocca's own indications. Indeed, Stewart attributes derivation from "London Bridge" to section **2(a+b)** whereas motivic analysis (cf. *below*) clearly suggests that La Rocca was referring to **1b**²³. In addition, and on the basis of the account we have just quoted in its entirety, La Rocca is extremely accurate as far as the reference to "London Bridge" is concerned, performed in *stop time* («As for the second part, it's "London Bridge Is Falling Down" – but in stop time [...]»)²⁴. There is, however, no formal convention of *stop time* in section **2** since, from the insider's perspective, it features, instead, a number of *breaks* whose significance is altogether different. In the stylistic unit called *stop time*, in fact, whenever an improvisational outburst from a solo instrument occurs, the ensemble breaks down a certain rhythmic model, with unison or homorhythmic breaks, as we shall demonstrate in our analysis of **1b**, instead of proceeding with a measured interruption of the continuous pulse made explicit, following the *breaks* tradition in blues and, later on, in jazz²⁵. At any rate, and as a result, our hypothesis raises the correlative issue concerning the origin of section **2(a+b)** which still remains unaccounted for – an aspect which will likewise be accurately documented further on.

In "Tiger Rag's" critical literature, Philippe Baudoin's²⁶ highly significant contribution to a broad and well documented overview of authorship and philology issues is crucial. Baudoin gives much credit to Morton's version which, as already mentioned and demonstrated, we have found to be unreliable. In addition, he does not mention the "London Bridge" hypothesis, thus tracing back the origin of sub-section **1b** to the waltz Morton²⁷ provided an indication for. Though in all cases left unresolved, the questions Baudoin emphasizes include the origin of section **3**'s harmonic grid and the absence of references to section **2** («we don't quite know where the second theme comes from»)²⁸. This article shall attempt to dispel those doubts section **2** has left

²² Mechanistically applying such an etic logic implies the risk of misleading the perception of eventual resemblances with just about anything. Through the categorical emic/etic opposition, we are reactivating Kenneth Pike's well-known distinction (cf. *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, Gravenhage, Mouton, 1954) between analysis based on the elements' concreteness, which is therefore descriptive (linguistically deriving from *phonetic*) and analysis based on the elements' function and structural relevance (likewise, derived from *phonemic*). In this anthropological perspective, the etic point of view refers, as a rule, to outsiders while the emic point of view refers to insiders.

²³ Cf. the specific analysis presented *below*.

²⁴ E. B. Allen and N. LaRocca, "How 'Tiger Rag' Was Composed", *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²⁵ Cf. "Stop-time" in Barry Kernfeld (ed.), *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, London, Macmillan Publishers, vol. III, 2002, p. 669, whose description tends to emphasize processual aspects: «[...] An ensemble or pianist repeats in rhythmic unison a simple one- or two-bar pattern consisting of sharp accents and rests [...].», whereas a *break* corresponds to a «brief solo passage occurring during an interruption in the accompaniment, usually lasting one or two bars and maintaining the underlying rhythm and harmony of the piece.» B. Kernfeld (ed.), *New Grove Dictionary op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 295.

²⁶ Philippe Baudoin, "Le tigre est toujours à l'affût ou L'épopée de "Tiger Rag"», *Jazz Classique Online*, XXXVIII, novembre 2005, p. 1-7 (p. 5). <https://goo.gl/apfv9z>.

²⁷ For this waltz's transcription in notation, cf. V. Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton, op. cit.*, p. 89.

²⁸ Ph. Baudoin, "Le tigre", *op. cit.*, p. 3.

us with. Let us now set our focus on the analytical assessment of these different theses, beginning with Nick La Rocca’s.

Nick La Rocca’s version

As far as the notion of “formative style”²⁹, is concerned, and especially among early twentieth century New Orleans insiders³⁰, the peculiar treatment of musical/figural models³¹ through real time, extemporizative³², polyphonic and heterophonic creative procedures, we may claim that, instead of being referred to motivic-thematic aspects, the relevant criteria in audiotactile musical categorization³³ of ragtime-based, multi-thematic compositions were:

- a) the single sections’ harmonic/architectural structure
- b) the tonal relationships among thematic sections³⁴

Those aspects related to the syntagmatic “axis of succession”³⁵ and to the melodic dimension, which hardly lend themselves to objectifying and documenting “pure” audiotactile contexts where no decoding of the sound dimension through cognitive grids and the segmenting-abstracting “theoretical weight” of Western music theory is activated, were substituted, in the context of New Orleans musicians lacking in knowledge of formalized music theory, by these two dominating factors. Harmonic rhythm and tonal mapping of sound space are the pillars of this perceptual model and of aural/audiotactile musical categorization: indeed, such factors are taken into consideration from the standpoint of those whose perception of these pieces is guided by creative appropriation rather than text reproduction, as in the case of written art music. In this perspective, melodic elements inevitably give in to structural/harmonic ones within such a cognitive hierarchy.

The analysis of harmonic structures (combined, in this case, with tonal relationships between sections) therefore works in terms of our “emic” examination first – though, not exclusively so, as we shall see – given that members of the culture just referred to, namely the community of musicians from New Orleans and their audiotactile cognitive approach, considered it to be a crucial and significant clue in a piece’s perceptive/creative codification. It is worth

²⁹ George List, “The Distribution of a Melodic Formula: Diffusion or Polygenesis ?”, *Yearbook of International Folk Music Council*, vol. 10, 1979, p. 33-52 (p. 50).

³⁰ By “insiders”, we mean the musicians performing in hot ragtime (pre-jazz) bands according to rules and processes of real time music creation.

³¹ Bernard Lortat-Jacob, “Improvisation: le modèle et ses réalisations”, in Lortat-Jacob, Bernard (éd.), *L’improvisation dans les musiques de tradition orale*, Paris, Sela, 1987, p. 45-59.

³² For the systemic notion of *extemporization*, as opposed to that of *improvisation*, cf. V. Caporaletti, *I processi improvvisativi*, *op. cit.*, p. 98; for a discussion of extemporative processes in relation to New Orleans jazz, cf. *ibid.*, p. 332.

³³ Specific to so-called *fakers*, meaning those who were not musically initiated to the codes of Western music theory.

³⁴ H. O. Brunn confirms such a taxonomic and categorizing criterion: «[...] many New Orleans musicians of that day, otherwise totally ignorant of written music, came to recognize their chords by letter and number [...] This thorough knowledge of chords was one of the most distinguishing features of the New Orleans ragtime musician, who perceived every number as a certain chord progression and was quick to improvise within the pattern», (*The Story*, *op. cit.*, p. 7-8). Such a distinctive criterion was also valid for other instances of ethnic and audiotactile perception of multi-thematic compositions: in Brazil, for instance, discerning *samba* from *maxixe* immediately after 1917 was a task based on the themes’ relative tonal qualities (mono-tonal ones for *samba* and multi-tonal ones for *maxixe*), less for their idiomatic aspects: cf. Manoel Aranha Corrêa Do Lago, “Fonti brasiliane in *Le boeuf sur le toit* di Darius Milhaud. Una discussione e un’analisi musicale”, in V. Caporaletti (a cura di), *Ring Shout-Rivista di Studi Musicali Afro-Americani*, II, 2003, p. 11-77 (p. 35).

³⁵ Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Fondements d’une sémiologie de la musique*, Paris, Union Générale d’Édition, 1975.

noting that such a categorization criterion has also remained unchanged through developments in the so-called modern jazz tradition³⁶.

Moving on to a detailed examination of La Rocca's claims, his clear-cut conclusion exposes the single, most forcefully emerging factor: «I never heard any such quadrille»³⁷. Through this claim, he liquidates all of those, including Jelly Roll Morton, who were firmly opposed to his copyright's legitimacy, claiming that the composition was at least partially, if not entirely, taken from an ancient quadrille, the so-called "Marseillaise" or "Praline"³⁸.

As we have already noted, even among historiographers supporting La Rocca's authorial paternity, most notably Harry Brunn and Jack Stewart³⁹ (the latter as co-author of the volume for "Tiger Rag"'s philological edition), some of the interpretations are, in my opinion, quite misleading. Let us, in the meantime, list those elements there is some interpretive agreement on.

– Sub-section **1a**. This is a musical catch phrase, a short ending number carrying, as we have gathered from La Rocca's account, connotations of mockery («get over, dirty»), made up of a two-measure melodic idea whose prior constitution La Rocca implicitly acknowledges as a traditional motif. Let us bear in mind, in relation to this point, that in the system of New Orleans jazz conventions, the cornet plays the lead melody within the multi-linear texture. The American musician of Sicilian descent integrates this idea in "Tiger Rag" with other materials, forming a phrase which is almost textually repeated with an ending clause, thus configuring the eight measure section in **1a**. Also in relation to this point, Baudoin⁴⁰ states that «[...] we've had trouble finding the passage matching the phrase "get over dirty"» while I have identified the recording of an interview conducted with La Rocca on May 26th, 1958⁴¹ where he shows exactly where such a colloquial expression is to be found. In my transcription of the composition's *incipit*, I have located the point where the *motto* is inserted (cf. Ex. 1).

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of sub-section 1a of "Tiger Rag". It consists of five staves: B♭ Clarinet, Cornet, Trombone, Piano, and Drum Set. The music is in B♭ major and 2/4 time. The Cornet part has a melodic line with a square box highlighting the phrase "(get o-ver dir-ty)". Dynamics include *f*, *mf*, and *p*.

Example 1. ODJB, "Tiger Rag", New York, March 25th, 1918, beginning of sub-section 1a, measures 1-2. The catch phrase "get over, dirty" is highlighted in the square box (transcription by V. Caporaletti)

³⁶ The *contrafact* phenomenon is inextricably tied to this perception. Cf. Frank Tirro, "The Silent Theme Tradition in Jazz", *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 53, n. 3 (July), 1967, p. 313-334.

³⁷ E. B. Allen and N. La Rocca, "How "Tiger Rag" Was Composed", *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁸ V. Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton*, *op. cit.*

³⁹ H. O. Brunn, *The Story*, *op. cit.*; J. Stewart, "Tiger Rag", *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Ph. Baudoin, "Le tigre", *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴¹ LaRocca Oral History, May 26th, 1958 Interview, William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz, Tulane University, New Orleans. La Rocca's indication occurs at 10'11"⁴² in the interview's time frame.

This two-measure suggestion whose origins, according to La Rocca, may be led back to a tango, is textually integrated as an *incipit* of “Barrel House Rag”’s first theme, printed by Fate Marable & Clarence Williams on November 9th, 1916⁴² (*cf.* Ex. 2), bearing witness to broad circulation (see *below*, however, for an alternative interpretation).



Example 2. Fate Marable & Clarence Williams, “Barrel House Rag”, score, New Orleans, Williams & Piron Music Publishers Company, ©1916, measures 5-12. The first two transposed measures match those considered to be homologous of 1a

Another published source would substantiate the origin of sub-section 1a from the fantasized *quadrille* Jelly Roll Morton kept referring to. As far as this matter is concerned, Jack Stewart informs us that «Though a printed version of [the quadrille] has never been discovered, Allan Jaffe, of Preservation Hall, did turn up a music box disc from 1867 with a few measures of the first strain of Tiger Rag (the so-called “Get over dirty” theme [...])⁴³. Stewart, however, shows as much skepticism about the reliability of this source released as a *long playing* record under the title !Tiger Rag (Quadrille Disc of Tiger Rag)⁴⁴ as the “*quadrille hypothesis*” itself («Neither of these references, though, would account for the fully developed version recorded by the ODJB in 1918»)⁴⁵.

Here below (Ex. 3), is a transcription in musical notation of the first eight measures of this indication a part of whose *incipit*, missing from the recording, we have just reconstructed. It is worth establishing immediately that this composition features no correspondence with the quadrille which Morton exemplified at the Library of Congress in 1938 (which was, in fact, closer to La Rocca’s version of “Tiger Rag”). This, however, does not make this indication any less reliable. There is no doubt that the harmonic structure of the first four measures, which is repeated, matches the one in 1a, in the I-I-V-I chord progression⁴⁶. So does the anacrusic

⁴² The score was published by Williams & Piron Music Publishers Company, in New Orleans: *cf.* David A. Jasen, *Ragtime. An Encyclopedia, Discography and Sheetography*, New York-London, Routledge, 2007, p. 494.

⁴³ Jack Stewart, “The Strangest Bedfellows: Nick La Rocca and Jelly Roll Morton”, *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. XV, 2001, p. 23-31 (p. 26).

⁴⁴ Anonymous, “Tiger Rag (Quadrille Disc of Tiger Rag)”, in Al Rose (ed.), *Played With Immense Success*, Pirogue Race Records LP, no serial number provided, 1979. This is a miscellaneous 33 rpm *long playing* record with documentary sleeve notes added to the historical exhibit on musical culture in New Orleans, *Played With Immense Success*, inaugurated in Crescent City on January 28th, 1979 in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution of Washington. Along with other intriguing clues, the following boastful presentation introduces this short piece in the sleeve notes: «This is the fifty-five seconds of astonishing musical history. You hear it here playing on a music box (1867) in its original quadrille form. The work was claimed in the early 20th century by “Jelly Roll” Morton and copyrighted by Original Dixieland Jazz Band members Nick LaRocca and Larry Shields». At any rate, it is unlikely that, even for the first theme, this quadrille could possibly match the one Morton indicated.

⁴⁵ J. Stewart, “The Strangest Bedfellows”, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁴⁶ This is, however, a recurring harmonic model in all quadrilles: see, for instance, quadrille N. 1, “Old Folks at Home”, from Stephen Foster’s collection (1854) *Old Folks Quadrilles*. The harmonic structure is the same as 1a, also with the same metric placement (and especially motivic identity) of the characteristic phrase we have identified as a “figural marker” in V. Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton, op. cit.*, p. 24. Further research oriented towards verifying the ways

multiple attack *acciaccatura* of the two half-phrases, and the motivic cell with the four notes on the tonic in the first and fifth measures. Despite the absence of the motif corresponding to the “get over dirty” *motto*, this composition may be considered one of the forerunners of the traveling motifs so widespread in Crescent City at the end of the 19th century, especially in view of the aural approach enabled by the mechanically plucked idiophone, the medium of the music box.



Example 3. **Anonymous piece of the 1867 music box, New Orleans**, in Al Rose (ed.), *Played with Immense Success*, Pirogue Race Records LP, no serial number provided, 1979 (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, first eight measures; the actual sounds are raised approximately up to a semitone)

– Section 3. Jack Stewart, along with the reference which La Rocca indicated – E. E. Bagley’s “National Emblem March” (more accurately, the harmonic scheme for the second theme of this march) – also identified other pieces sharing the same structure and going back to the most ancient present in New Orleans, “Sobre Las Olas” (1888)⁴⁷ by Mexican composer Juventino Rosas (1868-1894) (a possibility which Baudoin is also in agreement with: they both mean the first theme’s harmonic structure)⁴⁸. Of this structure, the ODJB instantiated: in **3x**, polyphonic extemporizational processes characterized by the pre-eminence of metric dissonance as a result of ternary grouping⁴⁹ (*secondary rag*⁵⁰, according to insiders’ ethno-theory); in **3y** the homophonic iterative formula referred to a stylistic unit of New Orleans German bands («um pa, um pa», according to La Rocca’s suggestive image); in **3z** the extemporizational elaboration where this iterative formula becomes the syncopation setting up, by way of an answer, the phono-iconic sound gesture of the tiger growl.

Attribution of structures **1b** and **2(a+b)** is yet to be established. As far as the first one is concerned, we have already anticipated that, contrary to Stewart’s claims, we find, once more, the stylization derivative of the “London Bridge is Falling Down” children’s tune. We have already noted the way the stylistic unit *stop time* is in fact in this sub-section, while section 2 includes *breaks* instead. Structural analysis can also shed light on a number of rhythmic-diatematic correspondences. Here below is a comparison between the transcription in musical notation of the beginning of “Tiger Rag”’s sub-section **1b** (Ex. 4) and the “London Bridge”, in order to verify the formal sampling criteria (Ex. 5).

in which this collection was distributed in New Orleans would be more than welcome as it would ascertain the plausibility of some of these connections.

⁴⁷ Cf. Jack Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend: Myth, Reality, and Musical Impact. A Preliminary Investigation”, *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. VI, II, Dic. 1991, p.1-13 (p. 1). Cf. *below* details concerning this piece’s reception in New Orleans at the end of the 19th century.

⁴⁸ Ph. Baudoin, “Le tigre”, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Cf. Harald Krebs, “Some Extensions of the Concepts of Metrical Consonance and Dissonance”, *Journal of Music Theory*, n. 31, 1987, p. 103-104; *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann*. New York–Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999; Peter Kaminsky, *Aspects of Harmony, Rhythm and Form in Schumann’s “Papillons”, “Carnaval” and “Davidsbündlertänze”*, University of Rochester, Ph. D. Diss., 1989. On ways of categorizing polyrhythms in jazz, cf. Laurent Cugny, *Analyser le jazz*, Paris, Outre Mesure, 2009, p. 272.

⁵⁰ The first discussion of this ethno-theoretical formulation conducted in terms of formalized music theory goes back to Don Knowlton, “Anatomy of Jazz”, *Harper’s*, March 1926, reprinted in Karl Koenig, *Jazz in Print (1856-1929). An Anthology of Selected Early Readings in Jazz History*, Hillsdale, N.Y., Pendragon Press, 2002, p. 457-461.

The image shows a musical score for measures 17-20 of 'Tiger Rag'. It features five staves: B♭ Clarinet (Cl.), Cornet (Cnt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Piano (Pno.), and Double Bass (D.S.). The B♭ Cl. part has a melodic line with accents and dynamic markings like *sfz*. The Cnt. part has a similar melodic line. The Tbn. part has a bass line. The Pno. part has a chordal accompaniment. The D.S. part has a rhythmic pattern.

Example 4. ODJB, “Tiger Rag”, New York, March 25th, 1918. Beginning of sub-section 1b, meas. 17-20 (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, concert pitch)

The image shows two staves of music for 'London Bridge Is Falling Down'. The top staff is the melody with lyrics: 'London bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down'. The bottom staff is a rhythmic accompaniment.

Example 5. Comparison between the melody of “London Bridge Is Falling Down” and La Rocca’s reduction. The most relevant notes are those which La Rocca selects from the “London Bridge Is Falling Down” melody, performed in stop time, only homorhythmically marking the main accents with the rhythm section

La Rocca’s procedure of reduction and selection of rhythmic-melodic traits in “London Bridge Is Falling Down” is especially interesting as it discloses some of the fundamental processes of audiotactile cognition unfolding in a context of oral elaboration (let us remind ourselves that La Rocca was musically illiterate). What is especially relevant to the Italian-American cornetist is the composition’s accent structure, homorhythmically performed with the rest of the group, holding in particular (meas. 17, cornet part) the prolonged thetic on the children’s tune initial C_4 , and carefully choosing the metric accent falling on the A_3 of the second measure of “London Bridge” in addition to the accents of duration emphasizing the word *down* in measures three and four (cf. Ex. 5). In “Tiger Rag”’s transfigured transposition, La Rocca enacts metric compression (closely related, perhaps, to Freud’s *condensation* process), thus eliding the end of measure two and the beginning of the third one of “London Bridge” and turning the phonic-textural relevance of the duration accent into metric accents (here, just as unconsciously, with an onomatopoeic echo effect on the syllables «[fal]-ling down»). The final A_3 (La Rocca’s meas. 20, Ex. 4), instead of the expected C_4 may be justified with demands for variety, avoiding coincidence with the C_4 which the (specular) melodic-rhythmic bridge begins with in the second half of the period. Recently and personally acquired historiographic evidence clearly substantiates this analytical demonstration⁵¹.

⁵¹ All through this article I have identified one of Nick La Rocca’s oral accounts – either unknown or poorly interpreted, given the lack of critical commentary (or its contradictory nature) within the literature – kept at the “William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz”, Tulane University of New Orleans (Dave Winston’s

We shall now turn to section **2(a+b)**. If we relate “London Bridge” to **1b**, then this section obviously needs to be attributed. The strategy to shed light upon the most mysterious and controversial of “Tiger Rag”’s sections consists, I believe, of looking for a piece linked to section **3**, instead of trying to identify the latter in genetically autonomous ways (as in the however significant “Sobre las Olas hypothesis”). The latter methodological option can only shed light on a single element of an entire, far more complex and organic set. The correlation of the binomial made up of sections **2** and **3** acquires a distinctive value. Furthermore, the quest for a piece including these two structures set in this specific order offers the significant methodological advantage of restricting the field of inquiry.

Here we have identified a piece corresponding to the set parameters, featuring the **2-3** sectional sequence on a harmonic basis – *criterion a*, as we have seen, the insiders’ ways of categorizing. It confirms, by way of an interesting coincidence, La Rocca’s often ill-spoken for (by the “quadrille theory” supporters) version: this is Edwin E. Bagley’s already quoted “National Emblem March” (©1906). This march is therefore a formal archetype of “Tiger Rag” not only as far as its second theme goes, as Baudoin and Stewart seem to think, but also because it *includes the metric and harmonic structure of the first*. This march’s first theme, as is well-known, is a quote of “The Star-Spangled Banner”⁵², presented here not in its own ternary meter but in a binary meter adaptation typical of march forms.

Then we examine the harmonic structures of the “National Emblem March”’s first two themes in comparison with those of “Tiger Rag”’s **2a-3** binomial (Fig. 2).

telephone interview with Nick La Rocca [La Rocca’s Interview, HJA 01-03-1960, Reel 1]), fully substantiating my own hypothesis. At any rate, Jack Stewart had no knowledge of this interview at the time he was drafting his philological article for the Library of Congress critical edition of “Tiger Rag” (J. Stewart, “Tiger’s Rag” *op. cit.*). It is to be attributed, I believe, to the interview’s non-literal transcription, providing just a summary with no documentation of La Rocca’s detailed account. Indeed, and in reference to minute 6’45” of the recording’s time frame, the transcribed text reads as follows: «La Rocca’s “Tiger Rag” is mentioned, NLR [Nick La Rocca, N.d.A.] seats parts of this composition; it is based on a tango, “London Bridge is Falling Down”, and the chord construction of Sousa’s [sic; recte E. E. Bagley, N.d.A.] “National Anthem (i.e., Emblem) March”.» (LaRocca Oral History, January 3rd, 1960, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, Transcript, p. 6). Indeed, data already and generically acquired is repeated without any contextualization. In the aural check of the recorded passage, instead, one may clearly perceive the way La Rocca introduces sub-section **1a** by humming it, not mentioning, however, the motivic “get over dirty” phrase and generically attributing it to a tango rhythm (an entirely coherent observation, considering the idiomatic syncopation), and then sub-section **1b**, claiming «That’s “London Bridge”», thus clarifying this sub-section’s provenance with extreme accuracy. I have located yet another one of La Rocca’s oral accounts, going back to a year and a half before, relating the same set of circumstances (La Rocca’s Interview, HJA May 26 1958, Reel 1, William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz, Tulane University, New Orleans); this point is clarified at 10’33” of the recording’s time frame.

⁵² When Edwin E. Bagley composed the “National Emblem March” in 1902 (published four years later), “The Star-Spangled Banner” was not yet the United States of America’s national anthem which only became so in 1931: it had been, since 1889, music of the Order of the American Marine’s Flag (this is the setting Puccini quotes it in 1904 as an introduction to the aria “Dovunque al mondo”, in *Madama Butterfly*). The music is from “The Anacreontic Song”, composed in the Seventies of the XVIIIth century by British composer John Stafford Smith (1750-1836). In the USA, this song became widespread through various popular forms, with different lyrics, only to become a patriotic hymn when Francis Scott Key added text to it in 1814 at the time of the Anglo-American War. Cf. Oscar G. Theodore Sonneck, *Report on “The Star-Spangled Banner”, “Hail Columbia”, “America”, “Yankee Doodle”*, Honolulu, University Press of the Pacific, 2001.

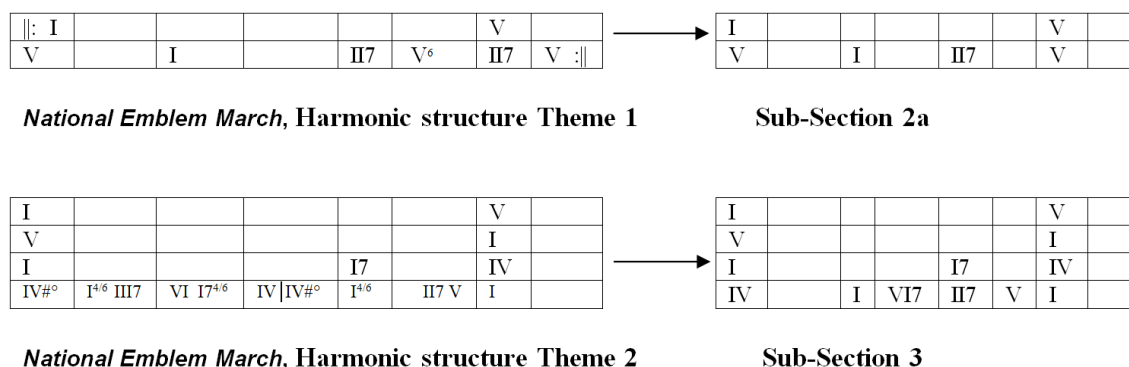


Figure 2. Congruency between metric/harmonic schemes of the “National Emblem March”’s first two themes in addition to “Tiger Rag”’s sections 2a and 3

The misunderstanding which many among the just mentioned eminent researchers slipped into consisted of taking the reference to the “National Emblem March”, which La Rocca indicated, solely (and to the detriment of the first one) as a harmonic scheme of its second theme. Nevertheless, the metric-harmonic sequence **2a-3** shows a perfect correspondence with the “National Emblem March”’s first two themes. Let us recall that La Rocca’s accounts were made available between 1958 and 1960: the American musician of Sicilian descent was in very poor health (he passed away in 1961) and referred to events occurred more than forty years earlier: we can hardly expect accuracy, let alone perfection. When La Rocca pointed to “National Emblem March”, he could hardly remember, in all likelihood, the point he had extrapolated the *exemplum* from.

Setting harmonic criteria aside, relevant as they are for insiders, as we have seen, at least three other factors concerning various phraseological and syntactic levels likely to emerge as a result of more in-depth musical analysis seem to relate the sections of “Tiger Rag” to this march.

In the first place, the deep phraseological structure of the “National Emblem March”’s first theme self-evidently implies the audiotactile notion of *break*: in this sense, the ODJB’s *break* in **2a** turns out to be the jazz transposition of the phraseological structure of the “March”’s first theme. If we observe the reduction provided for the beginning of the “The Star-Spangled Banner” quote in Bagley’s march, we will notice, in Theme I (Ex. 6), that at the *incipit* of the melody exposed by the trombone and the euphonium, flutes, clarinets and oboes respond with an incomplete idea, filling the void left by the melody’s vivid structure⁵³. The ODJB seizes this very dialectic shifting between empty and full, turning the woodwinds’ original answer into a *break* (cf. Ex. 7). Also noteworthy is the stylization, from La Rocca’s cornet, of the motivic *incipit* and the fact that both pieces are in the key of *E flat* major.

⁵³ Bagley, exposing here the originally ternary melody in binary meter, tends to reduce the full/empty schematism anticipating the *E*₃ which is perceived, however, as an otherwise well-marked variation of a deep structure.

Example 6. Reduction of the quote from “The Star-Spangled Banner” in “National Emblem March”, meas. 11-14 (concert pitch; 2/2 meter is rendered in 2/4 in order to facilitate comparisons with the homologous passage in “Tiger Rag” in Ex. 7). The section with markings is the one which the ODJB transformed into a break

Example 7. ODJB, “Tiger Rag”, New York, March 25th, 1918. Beginning of sub-section 2a, meas. 33-36 (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, concert pitch)

Secondly, after the two *breaks* in “Tiger Rag” (and the two answers from the woodwinds in the “March”), an analogous reactive textural “animation” stands out in both pieces, suggesting strict sensori-motor homologies between sub-section 2a and the “March”’s first theme.

A third and final aspect I presently wish to discuss concerns matters of syntax also supporting homologies between 2a and the “National Emblem March” theme. This topic may be defined in terms of “*Generalauftakt*”. We could actually point to a discrepancy between the two pieces in the textual repetition of 2a’s harmonic structure in the “National Emblem March”’s first theme, unlike “Tiger Rag”, where it becomes 2(a+b) (cf. Fig. 1 *above*). Paradoxically, such deformities confirm, instead, our hypothesis as a result of an adaptation specific to “Tiger Rag”, of Theme I of the well-known march, and therefore qualifying as an *ad hoc* application with no reason to be if it were applied to other pieces. In other words, there is clearly a compositional reason why sub-section 2b is inserted immediately after 2a; such motivation definitely has something to do with “Tiger Rag”’s overall tonal scheme.

The fundamental difference between “National Emblem March” and “Tiger Rag”, also considering the identity of the harmonic structuring of the first two themes of Bagley’s composition compared to sections 2 and 3 of the jazz piece, concerns what we have defined as the insiders’ *b criterion* of categorization (cf. *above*), namely the *relative* tonal relationship of various

architectonic articulations within this multi-sectional composition. The “March”’s first two themes are in the same key (*E flat* major), while a tonal excursion of an ascending fourth (*E flat* major and *A flat* major) subsists (cf. Fig. 1) among their homologous pieces of “Tiger Rag”. This may be accounted for in terms which the formal economy of ragtime compositions dictates and “Tiger Rag” draws inspiration from them. Section **3** is meant to be a *Trio*⁵⁴, a sectional unit, that is, tonally presenting, as a rule and according to the tradition of European marches embedded in ragtime forms, an excursion in the tonality a fourth above compared to the preceding section. The second theme of Bagley’s march, instead, *is not a Trio* (dwelling, as a matter of fact, on the first theme’s tonality). This, however, has consequences for La Rocca’s adaptation.

Theme 1 of the “National Emblem March”, with its protension towards the dominant chord area, occurring twice, presents a functional aspect at the harmonic level compared to the march’s second theme, homologous to a *Generalauftakt*⁵⁵. In other words, this section may be understood as an extended harmonic anacrusis, gravitating on the dominant, in terms of the resolution on the first degree (which the second theme in the “National Emblem March” represents on a large scale). From the standpoint of the formal economy of “Tiger Rag”, such a trait is dysfunctional since the large scale harmonic role of section **2** – within the logic of tonal macrostructure of the multi-sectional composition – is to predispose the further modulation a fourth above of the *Trio* (in section **3**) *once reached its own tonic, without dwelling on its own dominant*. Thus one can account for the textual non-repetition of the structure (as in “National Emblem March”) and the strategic insertion of a **1b** section transposed to a lower key (we have designated **2b** the **1b** sub-section with doubled measures) in the next 16 measures. Such an expedient works towards discharging dominant-chord energy in **2a**, deflecting it towards the tonic (the first degree of *E flat* major) and conferring a sense of a fully reached conclusion to the section while predisposing the further, though actually *ex abrupto* modulation, to the fourth above (*A flat* major) of section **3**, in order for the *Trio* to be properly characterized as such. Such a purely syntactic function of moving away from dominant key vectors of the “March”’s homologous section towards a tonicizing force in **2b**, I believe was increasingly felt by musicians, as years went by, as being redundant – the sense of its own subtle function was perhaps simply lost – and was certainly understood as an obstacle to the flow of the composition so as to justify elision in performances from the Thirties⁵⁶ on.

The discussion carried on so far ultimately has functional as well as genetic value. In the first place, it speaks in favor of La Rocca’s thesis, demonstrating not only that the harmonic structures of both the first two themes of the “National Emblem March” were used in the same sequence for the purposes of composing “Tiger Rag” but also accounting for changes occurred in the specific process of adaptation to the new piece. This confirms the intentional creative option, namely the specific choice of the “National Emblem March” as a model, in line with La Rocca’s claims and, secondarily, clarifies the hitherto unaccounted for origin of section **2**.

⁵⁴ It is well known that in classic ternary forms including the *Minuet*, the *Trio* is a contrasting section whose character is more lyrical and intimate and whose tonal set-up is, as a rule, in the sub-dominant key. In the musical genre of marches – especially in North-American tradition extended up to “Tiger Rag” through ragtime – the *Trio* is usually the third theme: in our case, section **3** (*Trio strain*, in “Tiger Rag” exceptionally on the fourth of the sub-dominant).

⁵⁵ Following the terms of phraseological theory, according to Hugo Riemann’s nomenclature, *Generalauftakt* designates «a large-scale upbeat, often occupying only the space of the upbeat to a Motive but functioning as the upbeat to a larger formal unit.», Ian Bent in “Analysis”, *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, London, Macmillan, 1980, p. 375. As for the “National Emblem March”, it is exactly a double *Period* (of the first theme), a hyper-measure, as it were, whose value is that of an anacrusis of broad proportions as a prelude to a strong affirmation (of the second theme).

⁵⁶ It is now possible to shed some light on yet another one of “Tiger Rag”’s enigmas which Baudoin draws our attention to.

As further confirmation, it is worth emphasizing that this interpretation had been implicitly supported, with the subtle allusion of *Signifyin(g)*⁵⁷, by none other than Louis Armstrong who, starting from his first recording⁵⁸ of “Tiger Rag”, often musically “quoted” the “National Emblem March”. It is likewise worth remembering that Jelly Roll Morton himself, immediately after having flaunted, in the famous 1938⁵⁹ interview for the Library of Congress in Washington, his knowledge of the allegedly classical origins of “Tiger Rag”, performs Bagley’s march, in a form of unconscious revelation⁶⁰.

At this point one might ask whether this adaptation strategy of the “March”, with the related *Trio*’s tonal dislocation, actually was La Rocca’s original idea or whether it was modeled on a prior *exemplum* assimilated through enculturation. At any rate, the ODJB confirms such practice: even “Dixieland Jass Band One-Step”, which the ODJB recorded on February 26th 1917, with structures similarly derivative from ragtime, included the final *Trio* in *A flat* major⁶¹ (from an identical initial tonal set up in *B flat* major also going through *E flat* major in the second section). It is entirely plausible that La Rocca might have enacted a syncretic⁶² juxtaposition of both of Bagley’s modular structures with reference to another piece with the harmonic structure of **3**, *in which the dialectic of tonal schemes from a distance of fourths was operative*. There may have been, that is, a re-functionalizing of a more archaic piece presenting section **3** with the quartal tonal relationship compared to sub-section **1a**, against which La Rocca might have juxtaposed the more “modern” image of the “National Emblem March” along with the related procedures of creative adaptation we have been referring to.

“Number Two”, and the African-Americans

Numerous accounts seem to converge towards the claim whereby something similar to “Tiger Rag” was called “Number Two” or “Nigger Number 2” in La Rocca’s audiotactically formative musical New Orleans *milieu* between the 19th and the 20th centuries. For instance, throughout the Fifties in the 20th century, Samuel Charters gathers the following version of the facts among African-American musicians from Crescent City.

“Tiger Rag” was usually known as “Nigger Number 2” by the white musicians and as “Jack Carey” by the Africans-Americans. Mutt (Carey) had gotten the first strain out of a book of quadrilles, the second and third strains were worked out by the band to show off George Boyd,

⁵⁷ The meaning of this notion elaborated by Henry Louis Gates and applied to music by Samuel A. Floyd Jr. (*The Power Of Black Music*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995) is a form of communication of an allusive kind, intrinsic to African-American culture, centered on connotation more than denotation in which meanings may be identified in terms of codes strictly specific to cultural group and its insiders.

⁵⁸ LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS ORCHESTRA [Louis Armstrong (trumpet), Ed Anderson (trumpet), Henry Hicks (trombone), Bobby Holmes Theodore McCord (clarinet), Castor McCord (tenor sax), Joe Turner (piano), Bernard Addison (guitar), Lavert Hutchinson (tuba), Willie Lynch (drums)], “Tiger Rag”, Okeh record 8800, New York City, May 4th, 1930.

⁵⁹ J. Greenberg and A. Lomax Wood (eds.), *Jelly Roll Morton*, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ In addition, there is an account of the explicit matching by the ODJB, by synecdoche, between “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “Tiger Rag” in the review of the ODJB’s performance at the *Victory Bal* held in London at the Savoy Hotel on June 28th, 1919 celebrating the Versailles Treaty. Cf. H. O. Brunn, *The Story*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁶¹ Interestingly enough in the context of this discussion, this *Trio* turns out to be, so to speak, another borrowing: Joe Jordan’s (1906) “That Teasin’ Rag”’s third thematic section, originally in *C* major, transposed in *A flat* major in “Dixieland Jass Band One-Step”.

⁶² “Syncretism’ understood according to Melville J. Herskovits’ definition, as «the tendency to identify those patterns in one new culture with similar elements in the old one». Cf. Frances Herskovits (ed.), *The New World Negro*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1966, p. 57.

the fine clarinet player, and the “tiger” section was worked out at a rehearsal one afternoon by Jack and Punch [Miller, N.d.A.] when Jack started making loud slides on a last chorus⁶³.

It is worth noting that such circumstances refer to 1913, the year Jack Carey (1889-1934) set up the Crescent City Orchestra. Warren “Baby” Dodds (1898-1959), veteran African-American drummer in Joe Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band, and partner of Louis Armstrong, not only in Hot Five and the Hot Seven recordings, also remembers:

And “Tiger Rag” they used to call “Play, Jack Carey”. The part where they say “hold that tiger”, Jack Carey would make on the trombone and they used to say “Jack Carey, Jack Carey!” Everybody played that way saying “Jack Carey” instead of “hold that tiger”. Was called by a dozen names in New Orleans: “No. 2,” “Meatball”, “Jack Carey”, “Snotsy”⁶⁴.

A composition entitled “Number Two Blues”, recorded in 1924, might help to shed some light on this complex matter. This is the most remote recording available to us presenting that very archaic designation – as we have seen, “Number Two”, along with “Nigger no. 2” and similar ones⁶⁵. This recording⁶⁶, released under cornetist Johnny DeDroit’s name (1892-1986), is especially interesting as it is also the first among *local* “first takes” of New Orleans musicians⁶⁷. Furthermore, DeDroit belonged to the same *milieu* as La Rocca, where instrumentalists were trained in Papa Jack Laine’s Reliance Band (*alias* George Vitale, 1873-1966), so much so that the patriarch of hot ragtime considered him to be his cherished one⁶⁸.

This recording is therefore very reliable. If we observe Tab. 2, we will notice the way the architectural scheme in “Number Two Blues” effectively includes the harmonic structure of section **3** (though, in this case, quite distinctly from “Tiger Rag”, with a direct tonal relationship of a fourth with sub-section **1a**, instead of a fourth of the fourth) along with sub-sections **1a** and **1b**, confirming here the relative tonal relationship of a fifth. Sub-sections **2a** and **2b** are missing.

⁶³ Samuel Charters, *Jazz New Orleans 1885-1963. An Index of Negro Musicians of New Orleans*, New York, Oak Publications, 1963, p. 24.

⁶⁴ Warren “Baby” Dodds and Larry Gara, *The Baby Dodds Story as Told to Larry Gara*, Alma, Rebeat Publications, 2002, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Hardly relevant for the authentic origin of the piece is the fact that DeDroit might have added the term *Blues* to the title (the piece is clearly not a *blues*) so as to be interpreted as an expedient to feel «free to copyright the arrangement as his own composition» (S. Charters, *A Trumpet, op. cit.*, p. 151). “Number Two” was also the very first piece performed *extra moenia* by a group of New Orleans Euro-American musicians – the Tom Brown Band from Dixieland – for the famous engagement at the Chicago’s Lamb’s Café in 1915. The opening night began with this very piece – which says a lot about the kind of consideration it was given. Cf. Arnold Loyocano in Nat Hentoff and Nat Shapiro (eds.), *Hear Me Talkin’ To Ya. The Story Of Jazz As Told By The Men Who Made It*, New York, Dover Publications, 1966, p. 81.

⁶⁶ JOHNNY DE DROIT AND HIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA [Johnny De Droit (cornet), Russ Papalia (trombone), Henry Raymond (clarinet), Rudolph Levy (alto sax), Frank Cuny (piano), George Potter (banjo), Paul De Droit (drums)], “Number Two Blues”, OKeh 40150 record, New Orleans, March 16th, 1924.

⁶⁷ It is widely acknowledged that the recordings of “jass” and jazz, later on, by New Orleans musicians were made in New York and Chicago; Ralph Peer’s “on the field” recording campaign for OKeh in 1924, instead, was the first *reportage* on sound reality originating from Crescent City captured in its own cultural context. Cf. Richard M. Sudhalter, *Lost Chords. White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 65. Here as well, “Number Two” is among the main tickets to ride for local Euro-American musicians.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67. In addition, the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra also featured Russ Papalia (1903-1972), an American trombonist of Sicilian descent.

1a	1a	1b	1b	1a	3	3	3
8 measures	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
collective extemporization		solo cl	solo cnt	collective extemp.	solo cl	collective extemp.	
F Maj.		C Maj.		F Maj.	Bb Maj.		
89 bpm							

Table 2. Structural/processual scheme in “Number Two Blues”, Johnny DeDroit and his New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, New Orleans, 16/03/1924.

Example 8. Johnny DeDroit and his New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, “Number Two Blues”, New Orleans, March 16th, 1924. Beginning of sub-section 1a (meas. 1-4) (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, concert pitch)

Was this piece really “Tiger Rag”’s precursor? We can verify, by crossing information coming from oral accounts and the results of music analysis, whether the three sections were such at the outset or whether they were assembled later. In 1955, Hentoff and Shapiro⁶⁹ found a significant claim of Jack Weber’s, a New Orleans itinerant musician, according to which the archetype of “Tiger Rag”, which he identifies in “Number Two”, «had only two parts until the Original Dixieland Jazz Band added parts for dance dates and recordings»⁷⁰. Weber is quick to point out that the bands would use the same pieces with their titles changed; what needs to be established here, however, is what insiders mean, in this case, by “parts”. Were the first two elements **1a** and **1b** understood in terms of motivic substance? Or was its classification relevant in harmonic/formal terms for 32-measure forms? If so, binomial **1a** and **1b** would have to be a constituent of the 32 measure AABA section (called *first strain*) which the other “part” **3**, also 32 measures long, would correspond to. Weber, however, does not or cannot tell us anything about inter-sectional key relationships.

Let us now examine both possibilities in detail. As far as the first case of classification according to melodic relevance is concerned, close scrutiny of Johnny DeDroit’s version provides at least one significant element for reflection. Oddly enough, sub-section **1b** is repeated: an argument in favor of the conception of a formal autonomy of its own. This sub-section, according to the categorization the musicians would assign to it, was not meant to be the *bridge* of an AABA form with its distinct architectonic identity (which seems to be more in line with the ragtime style). This would confirm La Rocca’s “National Emblem March thesis” (in the sense of using its *sub specie* harmonic second theme), presupposing a relatively late (post-1906) acquisition of structure **3**. This might effectively be identified as one of the parts which the ODJB, according

⁶⁹ N. Hentoff and N. Shapiro (eds.), *Hear Me Talkin’ To Ya*, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

to Weber’s account, added later on only to be retroactively incorporated, in turn, by De Droit in “Number Two Blues” with *novelty taste* (let us recall that the recording’s date is 1924, seven years after ODJB’s first one).

Here, however, we must reflect upon formal extension which, like perceptual categorization, is not to be neglected as far as compositional technique is concerned. Would sub-sectional elements **1a** and **1b** alone have guaranteed such morphological consistency as to justify an independent unity of musical conceptualization? In other words, would the piece have lasted long enough? Each sub-section, we must recall, is a concise four measure structure repeated so as to reach the extension of a single phraseological unit. A musical tradition which the piece with **1a** and **1b** might have been ascribed to did indeed exist and was active in the south of the USA at the end of the 19th century: the one leading improvisational practices in folk rags⁷¹. Did, by any chance, “Number Two” belong to this specific repertory? Personally, I have reservations, given that the absence of section **3** would not have enhanced formal consistency.

Let us now consider the second case, in terms of which the word “part” would correspond, for Weber, to the formal 32-measure structure thus including section **3** along with the AABA unit (*first strain*) based on **1a** and **1b**. The latter thesis would seriously undermine La Rocca’s position while the “National Emblem March hypothesis”, one of “Tiger Rag”’s principal formal/harmonic archetypes which, at this point, would be matching the archaic “Number Two”, would have to be dated back to before 1906. In that case, DeDroit would have actually proposed an ancient example of New Orleans oral tradition. Contextually, Stewart’s and Baudoin’s hypothesis regarding the genetic ascendant “Sobre las Olas” (Ex. 9) would gain credibility, as already noted, a composition published in 1888 by Mexican composer Juventino Rosas, whose first reception in Crescent City, however, goes as far back as December 16th, 1884 when the VIII Mexican Chivalry Band officially performed it, with Rosas himself conducting, at the New Orleans *World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*⁷².

Example 9. “Sobre Las Olas”, by Juventino Rosas. First section

⁷¹ Cf. Riccardo Scivales, “L’improvvisazione nel ragtime”, in V. Caporaletti (a cura di), *Ring Shout-Rivista di Studi Musicali Afro-Americani*, II, 2003, p. 109-156.

⁷² Cf. J. Stewart, “The Mexican Band”, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

This composition would be “Number Two”’s forerunner and, by the second generation, that of “Tiger Rag”’s section 3. Jack Stewart’s observation lends support to such a hypothesis: «“*Sobre las Olas*” was definitely a New Orleans favorite. It was Henry Brunie’s theme song, and was recorded and played extensively by both Sharkey Bonano and George Lewis. An early waltz folio from the Johnny DeDroit repertory shows it to be a well used favorite»⁷³ (italics ours).

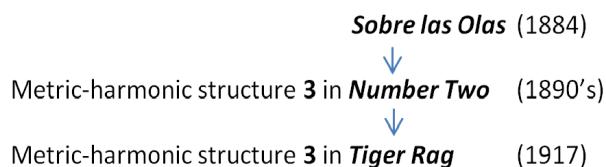


Figure 3. Derivation/diffusion of section 3’s harmonic structure

This genetic sequence is, among other ones, evidence for the transformation process of the harmonic-formal structure of an author’s composition (“Sobre las Olas”) in musical material belonging to public domain (“Number Two”), up to its neo-auratic (and neo-authorial) codification – enabled by discographic mediation – with the insertion in one further macro-text (“Tiger Rag”).

Ultimately, Jack Weber’s account seems to redefine La Rocca’s role, implicitly claiming that section 2, that is **2(a+b)**, is best understood as his original, unique structural contribution to “Number Two”. This is further substantiated by the quartal relationship in “Number Two”’s tonal scheme which might, in this respect, **2(a+b)** have been inserted in “Tiger Rag”. This would have, in turn, “modularly” caused further dislocation, also in terms of quartal relationships, of section 3 (and this would account for the derivation of the key of *A flat* major for this section).

In other respects, Weber nonetheless lends support to the substance of La Rocca’s version, given that the margin of creative novelty in “other” parts which the ODJB effectively «added for dance dates and recordings» would have required identification. “Which” of these parts, then, would have been added? There are no other ones beyond those listed so far, unless Weber did not mean – and so it seems – the motivic-thematic elements with which the former “Papa Laine’s boys” would extemporize such structures, to be interpreted as the result of a series of pre-programmed *routines*, according to the lesson most jazz historians go by. This author, instead, sees in them the result of processes of *neo-auratic codification* having clarified and “thematized” extemporizational processes of a secondary type based on *audiotactile* formativity thus magnified and elevated to compositional ranks by a number of aesthetic-anthropological ties suggested by the mediological dynamics of sound recording⁷⁴. Whatever the structuring decided for in the context of rehearsals was, it is the actual record version – with its many idiosyncratic elements deriving from the extreme lightness of performance – that ended up prevailing, as a result of repeated listening which the performers themselves engaged in and having internalized that particular version as the text to be reproduced in the following performances in live situations as much as on record⁷⁵.

Ultimately, it may be inferred from Jack Weber’s account that the innovative creative factors within the competence of La Rocca and cohorts, would consist of section 2 and in the entire melodic-rhythmic articulation produced on structure 3, along with the demonstrated idiosyncratic “style”. Motivic element **3y** (which La Rocca mnemotechnically defines *hone-ya-da*) would have already been present in the *Quadrille*, according to Morton. In any case, DeDroit employed it in 1924 as an *obbligato* in the contrapuntal treatment of the second theme of “The

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Cf. V. Caporaletti, *I processi improvvisativi*, *op. cit.*

⁷⁵ See, for such dynamics based on neo-auratic cognitive mediation, *ibid.*, p. 121.

Swing”⁷⁶, another member of “Tiger Rag”’s *Familienähnlichkeit* system (though, in all likelihood, DeDroit might have used it following the composition’s record release).

The elements in this puzzle gradually seem to arrange themselves more reliably and in orderly fashion, but we can extend our inquiry even further: “Number Two Blues” is certainly an earlier indication (discographically, at least) of the “Tiger Rag” *tune family*⁷⁷, with its firmly established designation, as we have seen, in oral accounts. But are we really sure that Weber was specifically referring to this piece, when indicating both parts of the archetypal antecedent? Indeed, he does quote “Number Two”. Experience of field research, however, teaches us that informants sometimes tend to confuse situations when attempting to account for temporally distant sets of circumstances.

What might be of some help, in this respect, is another composition entirely unrelated to the present discussion, one not contemporaneous with “Number Two Blues”, recorded twenty years later, in 1944, by a group of African-Americans. Apparently a routine piece in “New Orleans Revival” style, signed by two illustrious veterans such as trombonist Edward “Kid” Ory (1886-1973) and guitarist/banjoist Arthur “Bud” Scott (1890-1949). Most likely an original piece, therefore endowed with special meaning. The title, for jazz historians, does not go unnoticed, unequivocally drawing connections to ancient accounts collected by Ramsey and Smith⁷⁸ in 1939, which Marquis confirmed:⁷⁹ we are talking about “Get Out of Here (And Go on Home)”⁸⁰, that closing number which Charles “Buddy” Bolden’s band (1877-1931) – the leading figure of hot ragtime – performed around 1897, which informants designated, in their accounts, as “*Tiger Rag in the district*”. Also featured among the musicians who recorded it was cornetist Thomas “Papa Mutt” Carey (1891-1948)⁸¹, Jack Carey’s brother who, as we have seen with Charters, was credited for “discovering” the trombone descending *glissando* (*plop*, a *portamento* effect not originally phono-iconically associated to the tiger growl).

This recording’s entire significance emerges in all of its intentionality in light of the present discussion. It almost seems that, in a reunion whose value was consciously documental, New Orleans old African-American musicians wished to pass on, with a somewhat esoteric *double talk*, a manuscript in a bottle, finally bearing witness to something going back to more than forty years before which they had witnessed themselves at the beginning of their musical careers (Ory was 21 years old at the time he quit Bolden’s stage, in 1907, while Scott already enjoyed opportunities

⁷⁶ JOHNNY DE DROIT AND HIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA [Johnny De Droit (cornet), Russ Papalia (trombone), Henry Raymond (clarinet), Rudolph Levy (alto sax), Frank Cuny (piano), George Potter (banjo), Paul De Droit (drums)], “The Swing”, OKeh 40090 record, New Orleans, March 16th, 1924.

⁷⁷ Samuel P. Bayard, “Two Representative Tune Families of British Tradition”, *Midwest Folklore*, n. 4, 1954, p. 13-34. We are not using the formulation “melodic family” (which is the current Italian-language version of *tune family* in ethnomusicological literature) since, in this case, melodic structure is not as relevant as the sections’ harmonic/tonal structuring. Indeed, and by analogy with the concept of “associative field” of linguistic signs, we have chosen the more comprehensive notion of *piece’s associative field* or *unit of musical conceptualization*.

⁷⁸ «“Get Out of Here and Go on Home”– That’s what they called “Tiger Rag” in the “district”», Charles Edward Smith, “White New Orleans”, in Frederic Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith (eds.), *Jazzmen*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939, p. 51.

⁷⁹ «The last [Buddy Bolden’s] number of the evening was also a special theme song, but it differed according to the audience [...] the closing number was always “Get Out of Here and Go on Home” [which] seems to have been the dismissal number for rougher places like Funky Butt or Odd Fellows halls.», Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2005, p. 108.

⁸⁰ KID ORY’S CREOLE JAZZ BAND [Thomas “Mutt” Carey (trumpet), Edward “Kid” Ory (trombone), Omer Simeon (clarinet), Buster Wilson (piano), Bud Scott (banjo), Ed Garland (double bass), Alton Redd (drums)], “Get Out of Here (And Go on Home)”, Crescent 2 record, Los Angeles, August 3rd, 1944.

⁸¹ As we have seen, S. Charters, *Jazz in New Orleans*, *op. cit.*, reports that Mutt Carey would have created sub-section 1a by adapting it from a book of quadrilles; there is a discrepancy, however, between such an indication and the previous use, largely substantiated by Bolden starting from 1897 («Another number that Bolden and most everyone in New Orleans played was the tune later known as “Tiger Rag”», D. M. Marquis, *In Search*, *op. cit.*, p. 107). Besides, Mutt Carey’s own musical activity did not start before 1910.

to work with the cornetist at age 17): a way of saying that «if you're looking for the origins of "Tiger Rag", here's where you'll have to dig...», and, if we consider the arguments so far presented, the analytic digging won't leave us empty-handed.

As it turns out, the composition actually presents *two sections* (cf. Tab. 3) in line with Jack Weber's claims, alternating according to the archaic tradition of extemporized rags, and both sections match, *in toto*, harmonic structures **1a** and **3**, with the relative tonal relationship of a fourth (just like in "Number Two"). From a melodic standpoint, **1a** in "Get Out of Here" presents a paraphrase of the corresponding sub-section of the ODJB's "Tiger Rag" (cf. Ex. 10). In addition, the semantic connotation "get over, dirty", which La Rocca would have attributed to this section's melody, corresponds to "get out of here (and go on home)": what, in dance hall culture, was very likely an exhortation addressed to clients (especially the more riotous ones, reluctant to leave the premises), signaling the end of the evening (Marquis, as we have seen, defines it as «Bolden's [...] closing number»: an "ending number").

Interestingly, section **3** is performed with metric diminution, following the particular norm of *tempo* transformation with a "real doubling" of the metronomic value of the unit of motion⁸² (differentiated from the other so-called "double time" performance convention: indeed, the verse structure [*chorus*] matches, in this case, 16 measures, instead of the canonical 32)⁸³.

⁸² Vincenzo Caporaletti, "La fenomenologia del ritmo nella musica audiotattile: il tempo doppio", in V. Caporaletti (a cura di), *Ring Shout-Rivista di Studi Musicali Afroamericani*, I, 2002, p. 77-112.

⁸³ Such metric compression is also a feature of the *Trio* of the already quoted "Barrel House Rag" by Fate Marable and Clarence Williams, from 1916, which uses the very harmonic structure of section **3** with slight cadential variants (and, it must be remembered that in this piece we have also rediscovered the textual and explicit exposition of the *incipit* of **1a**, the "get over dirty" phrase): these factors tend to qualify it overall as a lot more than just a secondary reference for "Tiger Rag". For these and other aspects, this piece raises questions if regarded in relation with the ODJB's, which it seems to be sharing a number of characteristics with. A direct influence is very unlikely, however, given that on November 9th, 1916, when "Barrel House Rag" was legally registered (© n. E391570; Marable is indeed "Marble"), the musicians of the then recently constituted ODJB were in Chicago for eight months and their repertoire must have, in all likelihood, already included "Tiger Rag". "Barrel House Rag" had not been recorded; it was published, instead, on paper and on pianola roll (Kimball 7142), therefore, through other distribution channels (unable, unlike discographic media, to codify extemporizational processes). There was, instead, and in all likelihood, a possible "reverse" relationship if we trace the connection between the November 9th date with the previous October 31st, the day La Rocca dismissed clarinetist Alcide "Yellow" Nuñez (cf. H. Brunn, *The Story, op. cit.*, p. 44), and when Nuñez left Chicago for New Orleans, moved by resentment and ready to take revenge. We must keep in mind that Nuñez himself would have, a few months later, anticipated the ODJB, betraying them, in the legal deposit of "Livery Stable Blues" (© E403401, May 24th, 1917, under the name of Alcide Nuñez and Ray Lopez) forcing the band into an extenuating and futile legal action for copyright. In light of all this, it is very likely that he might have convinced, at that particular time, Clarence Williams, who was among the major musical authorities in Crescent City, and surely able to gain easy access, as a legally protected publisher, to registration with copyright of one of the public domain pieces circulating in New Orleans – a piece which, in the meantime, was transformed, through the name of "Tiger Rag", into one of the most significant pieces of the band's repertoire Nuñez had been performing with for the last months – to take revenge against those who had mistreated him, ultimately dismissing him. In all likelihood, Nuñez might have advanced a persuasive argument whereby the ODJB would have had people believe that Clarence Williams and Armand Piron's composition "Brown Skin (Who You For?)" was their own (for confirmation of this episode, see Lynn Abbott and Dough Seroff, "Brown Skin (Who You Really For?)", *The Jazz Archivist*, vol. XV, 2001, p. 10-16). Also noteworthy is the way Williams, several years later, might have argued for "Tiger Rag's" derivation from a more archaic piece (in our opinion, Buddy Bolden's "Get Out of Here"): The next month [November 1936], *Orchestra World* published a letter from [Clarence] Williams, backing off his October claim that "Tiger Rag" was an original negro tune», Lawrence Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of The Creole Band*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 208.

1a	1a	3	3	1a	1a	3	3	3	3	3	3
8 measures	8	16	16	8	8	16	16	16	16	16	16
collective extemporization							solo cl		collective extemporization		
Bb Maj.		Eb Maj.		Bb Maj.		Eb Maj.					
114 bpm										120 bpm	
→ Metric Structure 3 is actually doubled (metric compression)											

Table 3. Structural/processual scheme of “Get Out of Here (And Go on Home)”, Kid Ory’s Creole Jazz Band, Los Angeles, August 3rd, 1944

Example 10. Kid Ory’s Creole Jazz Band, “Get Out Of Here (And Go on Home)”, Los Angeles, August 3rd, 1944. Sub-section 1a (meas. 1-8) (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, concert pitch)

It is worth noting how, in the New Orleans musicians’ semantic system (the insiders’ perception, that is), harmonic-formal structures **1a**, **1b** and **3**, with their related tonal relationships, are specific factors of “Number Two” whereas **1a** and the metrically compressed section **3** may be, in comparable ways, the constituent elements of “Get Out of Here”. The fundamental distinctive trait is therefore **1b** whose presence/absence marks changes in the unit of musical conceptualization⁸⁴, with, it would seem, the composition’s character done by the livelier tempo in “Get Out of Here” as opposed to the considerably more restrained one in “Number Two” (*cf.* Tab. 4).

⁸⁴ Any genetic consideration of an evolutionary nature would be entirely conjectural, on the basis that “Get Out of Here” might have been more archaic compared to “Number Two” in view of its minor structural complexity. For quite some time now, ethnomusicological research has clearly demonstrated that the least complex is not necessarily more archaic, since a reverse process might be set according to which some structures might lose parts as chronological time flows, thus being simplified. More specifically though, a progression from simple to complex is a lot more plausible.

	Quadrille (Morton 1938)	Morton 1938 <i>Tiger Rag</i>	ODJB 1917 <i>Tiger Rag</i>	ODJB 1918 <i>Tiger Rag</i>	ODJB 1919 <i>Tiger Rag</i>	ODJB 1923 <i>Tiger Rag</i> [idem 1936]	Morton 1924 <i>Tiger Rag</i>	Friars (NORK) 1922 <i>Tiger Rag</i>	DeDroit 1924 <i>Number Two</i>	DeDroit 1924 <i>The Swing</i>	A.Lyman 1923 <i>Weary Waesel</i>	K.Ory 1944 <i>Get Out Of Here</i>	Marable & Williams 1916 <i>Barrel House Rag</i>	Louisiana Five 1919 <i>Clarinet Squawk</i>
1a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
1b	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
3x	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3y	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
3z	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	+

Table 4. Presence/absence of the structures identified in various recordings of “Tiger Rag” and a comparison with other pieces of the tune family. The table is organized according to density of elements and deliberately disregards chronological order

In this sense, the Friars Society Orchestra’s position (The New Orleans Rhythm Kings, that is - which the great American clarinetist of Sicilian descent Leon Roppolo performed in) is interesting: in their 1922⁸⁵ version of “Tiger Rag”, they actually go as far as eliding theme **1b**, in almost strict compliance with the most archaic “Get Out of Here”. Anyhow, it is not fortuitous that one modification of **1b** (metric and tonal variant **2b**, as we have seen) ends up constituting, along with **2a**, a fundamental and distinctive mark of “Tiger Rag”’s conceptual/musical unit in the ODJB versions (and, unsurprisingly, of Morton’s versions in the Library of Congress recordings) in ways strictly related to the “National Emblem March”’s metric-harmonic basis.

Also noteworthy is the fact that in exemplifying the *Quadrille*, Morton follows exactly “Number Two”’s sectional and tonal schemes – a sign of philological reliability – even though later on, when proposing “his” jazz version of the quadrille, *jazzin’ the classic*, he clearly follows the footsteps of the ODJB’s version⁸⁶.

At any rate, also in light of the analysis of “Get Out of Here”, here is a confirmation of the scenario supporting the second hypothesis we formulated in relation to “Number Two Blues”. Within the structural-harmonic factors of section **2** and the motivic-thematic ones of sections **3x**, **3y**, **3z**, the valid thesis is the one pointing to the ODJB’s original contributions, aside from, of course, the set of elements of the “concrete form”, of the energetic-dynamic kind, namely the sensori-motor elements initiated by processes of *extemporization* recorded on a sound support.

So far, the literature has failed to duly assess such factors (and so, here we are, leading yet another inquiry as far as harmonic-formal and motivic-thematic levels are concerned, at a further subordinated hierarchical level): namely, the set of elements we have just named “infrasegmental Dxs”,⁸⁷ which are fundamental for the definition of processes known as *swing* and *groove* in audiotactile music. Taking into consideration parameters related to sound quality, to the kind of sound attack and release, to the idiolect⁸⁸ of tactus subdivision and *tempo*, “Number Two” and “Tiger Rag” – harmonically homologous and in relation to unfolding processes of extemporization – take on entirely divergent connotational traits, thus letting differentiated semantic implications unfold. “Number Two” (with quarter note = 89 bpm) seems to be fairly slow, with a merrily undulating rise, of a deep South placid rustic atmosphere, while the ODJB’s

⁸⁵ FRIARS SOCIETY ORCHESTRA [Paul Mares (cornet), George Brunies (trombone), Leon Roppolo (clarinet), Jack Pettis (tenor sax), Elmer Schoebel (piano), Lou Black (banjo), Arnold Loyocano (double bass), Frank Snyder (drums)], “Tiger Rag”, Gennett 4968 record, Richmond, August 29th, 1922.

⁸⁶ Cf. V. Caporaletti, *Jelly Roll Morton*, *op. cit.*

⁸⁷ Cf. V. Caporaletti, *Swing e Groove*, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

⁸⁸ The notion of idiolect, understood as a «single speaker’s private and individual code» was introduced in an aesthetic context by Umberto Eco, *La struttura assente*, Milano, Bompiani, 1968, p. 68.

music foregrounds the rhythmic frenzy of the pulsating reality of the Northern industrial metropolis, and the sound image of the related new models *à la page* of social interaction, with the futuristic myth of speed (in “Tiger Rag”’s 1919 version, recorded by the ODJB, the quarter note value is set to 130 bpm).

Furthermore, another highly significant differential factor determines such effects: tactus subdivision. In “Number Two”, the more restrained flow enables the highlighting of a slight dephasing in the duration of the two putative eight notes di subdivision of the unit of motion, with a slight *long/short* articulation. In the ODJB’s frenetic performance, higher metronomic speed produces the effect of quantizing eight notes. At any rate, the kind of sound attack and release as well as the ways of articulating pulse, implying different *groovemic* qualities in both performances, are entirely different.

It must be emphasized that the aspects we are referring to, at a semantic-musical level – of extra-musical connotations emerging from lines of relevance identified by the oppositional couples of culture urban-industrial/agricultural economy, metropolis/province, progressive attitude/traditional – as much as at a level of the motor *interpretant*⁸⁹ from dancing listeners – something having to do with Waterman’s *subjective beat*⁹⁰ –, are highly significant within the negotiation of musical senses since the audience clearly perceives them. Indeed, it is also and fundamentally through these pathways that the music becomes a *fait social*. Those signs were encrypted in “Tiger Rag” at a deeply infrasegmental level, mediated by *motor behavior*⁹¹ tied to the audiotactile principle; when they first appeared, they indelibly marked, through their dense meaning, a whole era called *The Jazz Age*.

Blending in with the manifestations of social anthropology and metaphorizing itself in behavior and forms of life, audiotactile musical creativity transcends the series of values conveyed by such “visual” media as writing. The factors at play within the psycho-somatic implementation of performance come to life, instead, through electronic media offering the possibility of registering such energetic data as sensorial.

Conclusions

Throughout all of “Tiger Rag”’s formative narrative, as it became socially widespread, Nick La Rocca himself is actually the one to give credit to, through his own reliable claims, for a breakthrough in research, despite lacking the conventional music theory toolbox and the means of anthropologically thematizing his own condition of a self-taught musician uninitiated to formal musical literacy (*faker*). He would have probably been astonished in finding out that the model of his musical experience may be described as a radically audiotactile formative practice through which processes of neo-auratic codification mediated the criterion of progression/instantiation of traveling motifs.

The criteria of categorization which La Rocca set in motion were not based on cognitive principles modeled by Western music theory: his own aural representation of the “National Emblem March”’s harmonic structure enabled him to spot with a fair degree of accuracy a few topical elements which, once duly translated in specific instances of sound codification through psycho-corporeal mediation shared in his cultural *milieu* would have turned out to be subservient to the weaving of any formal thread. As we have already mentioned, we have elsewhere defined

⁸⁹ Charles Sanders Peirce, *Antologia dai Collected Papers*, Milano, Bompiani, 1984.

⁹⁰ Cf. Richard Waterman, “African Influence on the Music of the Americas”, in Sol Tax (ed), *Acculturation in the Americas*, New York, Cooper Square, 1952 (print. in Steven Tracy (ed.), *Write Me a Few of Your Lines. A Blues Reader*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1999, p. 17-27).

⁹¹ Erich M. von Hornbostel was the first to formulate the notion of *motor habit*, “African Negro Music”, *Africa*, vol. I, I, 1928, p. 25-26.

as *audiotactile*⁹² a form of cognition and poietic intentionality as the basis of such dynamics. The concept of abstraction and formal segmentation allowed by Western music theory, based on metric computation of morpho-syntactic nuclear units projected onto a visual-notational context – as we have suggested in this contribution’s musical analyses – enables us to come to terms with instances whose mere aural acknowledgement and iconic description, instead, though culturally fit for pragmatic/communicative orientation, fail to account for melodic profiles and metric properties. And the problem is further complicated if, as in La Rocca’s case, this overly imaginative illustration is exerted on a sound agglomerate perceived, in itself, as a visually unstructured set non-segmentable through notions of formal music theory and exclusively experienced at an audiotactile level as energetic, psycho-somatic and affective interaction.

In other words, though La Rocca’s music “ethno-theory” may be more than appropriate for purposes of communication with his own partners in the context of performance or simply to pass it on to younger generations in a context of mimetic learning, it does not guarantee the demonstrative possibility of authorial instances and the irrefutable proof of compositional implementation. Audiotactile musical sensibility preferably unfolds through channels of sensitive-energetic cognitive mediations rather than abstractive-rational ones; culturally specific elements can hardly subsist outside direct perceptual experience. This is the reason why insiders’ thematization is especially problematic when formulated in such terms as those legitimated by copyright law. For instance, when speaking of “Tiger Rag”’s first section, La Rocca illustrates the provocative and derisive meaning which the short catch phrase took on for him, the circumstances he used it in, and much else: everything except formally describing it. And when referring to the harmonic structure of the “National Emblem March”, he draws no distinctions between the themes it is composed of (using, as we have seen, the first and the second one to harmonic ends). In the case of the iterative motivic cell acting as a *call and response*⁹³, La Rocca speaks of an «“um-pa” of old New Orleans German bands»: a concrete-descriptive and onomatopoeic reference from the jargon of musicians in bands whose citizenship in a context allegedly explicating formal properties is rather uncertain.

Actually, and as we have often times reiterated, the relevant element in La Rocca’s view was the harmonic/architectural structure of the pieces he was referring to solely for utilitarian purposes so he could weave polyphonic extemporizational threads with his ensemble and cohorts. Obviously such categorization, according to Nattiez-Molino’s semiological triad⁹⁴, is of a poietic kind, signaling the active perspective of the message’s sender, of the extemporizing musician who functionally seizes the structure of a piece and its harmonic architecture so he can creatively move within it. Another factor of primary importance in its categorization was the logic of formal movement of an energetic order and of prosodic flow: in “London Bridge is Falling Down”, for instance, the symmetrical and repetitive structuring of the childlike rhythm, generating the responsorial structures of the clarinet *portamenti* in the second theme in *stop time*. At any rate, for an audiotactile cognitive model strongly characterized, the ties of motivic-thematic order are subordinate in terms of hierarchical function compared to the sensori-motor characteristics and harmonic rhythm (and model), since it is on the latter that the values and the creative apparatuses in real time are set up.

With regards to the sources of “Tiger Rag”, and while still holding the threads of this complex analysis, we may establish the following:

– Sub-section **1a**

⁹² Cf. V. Caporaletti, *I processi improvvisativi*, *op. cit.*

⁹³ Cf. S. Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music*, *op. cit.*

⁹⁴ Cf. J.-J. Nattiez, *Fondements d’une sémiologie*, *op. cit.*

Whether they came from the 1867 phono-tactical device or another anonymous clue, a number of motivic catch phrases were spread in New Orleans at the end of the nineteenth century through oral tradition, turning into Buddy Bolden’s “Get Out of Here and Go on Home” and La Rocca’s *get over dirty* catch phrase (see Ex. 1 above). We also find the harmonic reference in the first theme of “Number Two” recorded by Johnny DeDroit. The semantic aspect is that of the end of the show “closing theme”⁹⁵, later used in “Tiger Rag” as well as in Marable-Williams’s “Barrel House Rag” as an *incipit* evocative of the festive atmosphere of dance entertainment. This is an index of an established and strict correlation, within the Orleanians’ semantic system, at the beginning of the twentieth century, between the short idea from the cornet (playing the lead melody) at the very foundation of sub-section **1a** and the dance halls, in an accurate metaphoric sense more than, as for other pieces, generically based on synecdoche and connotation.

– Sub-section **1b**

We have just provided ample demonstration of the way this sub-section (see Ex. 4 above) finds its motivic ascendant in “London Bridge Is Falling Down”, thus rectifying what was presented as evidence in “Tiger Rag”’s philological edition⁹⁶.

– Section **2(a+b)**

We have led this section, which remains especially controversial and unaccounted for as to its genetic attribution within the literature, as far as **2a** (see Ex. 7 above) is concerned, back to the metric-harmonic and phraseological structure of the “National Emblem March”’s first theme (“Star-Spangled Banner” in binary meter) and, as far as **2b** is concerned, to its syntactic adaptation to the dynamics implicit in the distribution of “Tiger Rag”’s tonal schemes. One might wonder what motivated La Rocca to make these choices: why the “National Emblem March” instead of another piece? There’s no doubt that the suggestive factor provided by the patriotic connotations carried by this march must be taken into consideration. As a symbol of national identity, for a *dago*⁹⁷, the son of an Italian shoemaker landed in New Orleans in 1887 from Salaparuta, the piece catalyzed a desire for integration, on the one hand, in a society whose class and ethnic barriers were very strong and, on the other hand, for the *American Dream*, which, through “Tiger Rag” and its secret code encrypted in such a heap of symbolic relations, was to become a reality.

– Section **3**

It is likely that dissemination in Crescent City of the harmonic structure of “Sobre las Olas”, between the eighties and the nineties of the nineteenth century, might have been a privileged vehicle, an *Ur*-structure, a morphemic archetype to be experimenting with the creative

⁹⁵ «“Get over dirty” was an ending» La Rocca claimed *en passant* (cf. *above*), with no in-depth elaboration of such a significant clue; as for Marquis, he informs us that «the [Bolden’s] closing number was always “Get Out of Here and Go on Home”», D. Marquis, *In the Search*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁹⁶ David Baker (ed.), *Tiger Rag*, *op. cit.*

⁹⁷ In the USA, immigrants of Italian descent were disparagingly called *dagoes*. Peter Vellon quotes an eloquent passage from the August 4th, 1899 issue of the *New York Sun* about the socio-anthropological status attributed to *dagoes*: «[...] the average man will classify the population as whites, dagoes, and negroes. This is the explanation of the lynching of Italians in Louisiana [...] The unwritten law of the South is that a white man shall not be lynched [...] The only exception is the Italian, who in this respect has been placed on terms of equality with the Negro», “Between White Men and Negroes”. The Perception of Southern Italian Immigrants Through the Lens of Italian Lynchings”, in W. J. Connell and F. Gardaphé (eds.), *Anti-Italianism: Essays on a Prejudice*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 23-32 (p. 26).

potential of the performative forms of hot ragtime's collective extemporizations. Through "Get Out of Here (And Go on Home)" and "Number Two", through syncretic juxtaposition, as we have seen, La Rocca uses the reference to the harmonic structure of the second theme of the "National Emblem March", adding, in a form of creation shared with the group's other members, through extemporizational processes, the following formal ties at a rhythmic-melodic level:

- in section **3x**, melodic elements of an iterative kind, inserting in the binary metric structure "metric dissonances" in a ternary grouping (polyrhythms called *secondary rag*, as we have seen, in the ethno-theory of jazz jargon), especially in the clarinet part (Ex. 11);

Example 11. [ODJB, "Tiger Rag", New York, March 25th, 1918, beginning of section 3x.](#) (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, concert pitch)

- in section **3y**, the *ostinato* rhythmic formula, which La Rocca mnemotechnically called *hone-ya-da* (the cornet homorhythmically playing with the trombone a sixth below), imitating German bands style units (Ex. 12);

Musical score for Example 12, measures 97-101. The score includes parts for B♭ Cl., Cnt., Tbn., Pno., and D. S. A square box highlights a specific rhythmic-melodic cell in the Cnt. part, which is also mirrored in the Tbn. and Pno. parts.

Example 12. ODJB, “Tiger Rag”, New York, March 25th, 1918, beginning of section 3y. The rhythmic-melodic cell called hone-ya-da is emphasized in the square box. (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, concert pitch)

- in section 3z, the syncopation in this *ostinato* formula, setting up the famous tiger growl by way of an answer and interpolation, with the descending trombone *glissando*; there is, in fact, an iterative *crescendo* all through section 3y, gathering energy flowing into the 3z’s final syncopated section echoed by the growl imitation (Ex. 13).

Musical score for Example 13, measures 129-133. The score includes parts for B♭ Cl., Cnt., Tbn., Pno., and D. S. Dynamics markings include *f*, *mf*, and *sfz*. The Tbn. part features a descending *glissando*.

Example 13. ODJB, “Tiger Rag”, New York, March 25th, 1918, beginning of section 3z. (Transcription by V. Caporaletti, concert pitch)

Beyond all the authorial diatribes, it is very likely that it was the very idea of the realistic growl and the way it conferred an iconic and onomatopoeic reference to the trombone’s *glissando* – and here we enter the realm of the dynamics of twentieth century show business and its

marketing strategies – which promoted “Tiger Rag”’s success. With the tiger’s aggressive image, an interpretive key for the piece and thematization for dance moves was provided, with a more than felicitous discovery. All references to imitations of animals were, at the time, a fairly widespread expressive expedient, taken from vaudeville (the cock’s crow, which the clarinet provided an imitation of, the horse’s neigh iconized by the cornet, the cow’s moo by the trombone, as in “Livery Stable Blues”)⁹⁸: all of these strategies caught the metropolitan audiences’ curiosity and entertained them. Animal motion-inspired dances – Grizzly Bear, Kangaroo Hop, the Fox-Trot, etc. – were also highly widespread.

But the image of the tiger, in the urban context of New York, in connection with the energetic potential which compact orchestral cohesion developed, summoned quite a different system of connotations. It lies out from rural and traditional worlds, twisting that jocular and somewhat clownish image evoked by the habitual faunal-musical references. It projected group identity in the futuristic dimension of the impetuous myth of speed and of indefatigable and barbaric physical vitalism⁹⁹ and, not least, of exoticism, codifying, at the same time, the *flappers*’ light and elegant aggressive attitude and the strenuous determination in the race for self-affirmation in every field. Discographic success was therefore predetermined and ensured, perhaps, regardless of musical content itself, according to mass communication codes whose experimenting phase had just begun. With “Tiger Rag”, it was more than a record that was produced: a *Gestalt* had just been invented, a symbolic form of *Zeitgeist*, a consumption gadget destined to leave indelible traces on fashion and customs, an ideology of urban life introducing with great style the spirit of the imminent “roaring” *Twenties*.

As for the Arcadian version referred to by Charters¹⁰⁰, according to which the African-American Jack Carey, on a placid and sunny afternoon in 1913, would have come up with the expressive expedient of the trombone *glissando* with Ernest “Kid Punch” Miller (1894-1971) – as if the isolated initiative of a single individual in New Orleans would have sufficed to create the “Tiger Rag phenomenon”, without the “battery fire” of the powerful war machine of the rising record industry in the northern states of the USA (exclusively in New York, to be exact) – such a hypothesis was also cogently argued against, I believe with some reliability at a historiographic level, by Daniel Hardie¹⁰¹ who draws attention to the way Miller had become a member of the Crescent City Orchestra in 1919, two years after the ODJB’s recording. It is also true that, at the time, the trombone *glissando* was an innovative effect characteristic of the so-called *tailgate* style and that Jack Carey was no doubt one of the very first trombone players to introduce this style unit.

⁹⁸ ORIGINAL DIXIELAND “JASS” BAND [Nick La Rocca (cornet), Eddie Edwards (trombone), Larry Shields (clarinet), Henry Ragas (piano), Tony Sbarbaro (drums)], “Livery Stable Blues”, Victor Talking Machine Co. 18255-B record, New York, February 26th, 1917. This record was the first ODJB hit, with more than a million copies sold, and the first example of a New Orleans Jazz recording.

⁹⁹ The ODJB’s anti-intellectualism may be read into its members’ ostentatious and complacent emphasis on their own musical illiteracy. Nick La Rocca, for instance, stated: «I don’t know how many pianists we tried before we found one who couldn’t read music», (CH. E. Smith, “White New Orleans”, *op. cit.*, p. 51). Such a claim was far from the truth since Eddie Edwards, as well as Joseph Russell Robinson, the pianist who took Henry Ragas’ place, were both encultured to formalized musical codes (cf. H. O. Brunn, *The Story*, *op. cit.*, p. 13). At any rate, this image tended to reinforce primitivistic traits and creative spontaneity through which the ODJB was perceived although their performances actually resulted from accurate rehearsal sessions (*ibid.*, p. 91): we cannot speak of true improvisation as far as their extemporized performances in the first decade of the twentieth century are concerned. For this form of “calculated primitivism” in jazz at its beginnings, cf. William Howland Kenney, *Chicago Jazz. A Cultural History*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 41-42.

¹⁰⁰ S. Charters, *Jazz in New Orleans*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Hardie, *Exploring Early Jazz*, New York/Shanghai, Writers Club Press, 2002, p. 91. Lawrence Gushee also considers S. Charters, *Jazz in New Orleans*, *op. cit.*, to be unreliable: «Charters’ work, though pioneering, is widely understood [...] to be unreliable.», “Review of Frank Tirro, ‘Jazz: A History’”, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. XXXI, III, autumn 1978, p. 535-540 (p. 536).

We will never establish with certainty whether the habit of calling out the trombonist’s name (– *Play Jack Carey!*), had become, prior to or following “Tiger Rag”’s record release, a widespread social game, nor when the Crescent City Orchestra started performing it as if it were their own piece. But we could also reshuffle the cards and accept every hypothesis in a kaleidoscope of interconnections disclosing the wealth and beauty of processes of cultural hybridity escaping the rigidity of single-cause explanation.

What we are in a position of claiming, beyond all doubts, is that the deep-rooted, normalized practice of sharing units of musical conceptualization within the community in the context of oral tradition, going as far as blurring its eventual authorial origin, as those years between the first and the second decade of the twentieth century went by, had lost every *raison d’être*. This epochal anthropological unraveling whose formative, diffusional and receptive dynamics of the Tiger Rag¹⁰² cultural unit is one of the more densely significant examples and symbols. It clearly marks the crest where the music of oral tradition, mediated by the new, twentieth century neo-auratic sensibility, resulting from the means of crystallizing and fixing sound texts and their related social and institutional structures of economic exploitation, has irreversibly turned into audiotactile music.

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¹⁰² For the notion of “cultural unit” cf. Umberto Eco, *Trattato di semiotica generale*, Milano, Bompiani, 1975, p. 98.

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