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# Prodigal Sons, Trap Doors, and Painted Women: Reflections on Life Stories, Urban Legends, and Aural History

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## Oral History Society

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# PRODIGAL SONS, TRAP DOORS, AND PAINTED WOMEN: SOME REFLECTIONS ON URBAN FOLKLORE, LIFE STORIES, AND AURAL HISTORY

by Charles Hardy

## ABSTRACT

This article explores how black migrants from the American South made sense of their encounters with the 'Bright Lights' of northern industrial metropolises in the early decades of the twentieth century. It also traces the oral historian's attempts to understand the origins of a series of folk tales and personal narratives that elderly African Americans used to encode their own youthful experiences with the pleasures and dangers of the red light districts of industrial Philadelphia.

To demonstrate how black men plotted their life experiences in the Biblical story of the Prodigal Son, Hardy produced a seven minute audio montage from oral history interviews, archival musical recordings, and James Weldon Johnson's recording of his poem, 'The Prodigal Son'. Featured in 'Mordecai Mordant's Celebrated Audio Ephemera', a series of audio art montages first broadcast on public radio in the United States in 1985. The piece can now be heard on the Talking History website, <http://www.talkinghistory.org/hardy/html>

## KEY WORDS:

African-American history; migration; folk tales; public radio; web-site aural history

On 7 June 1983, I drove down to the Open Door Senior Center in southwest Philadelphia, a poor and comparatively isolated neighbourhood hit hard by the de-industrialisation that had devastated the city during the past twenty years. I went there to interview two elderly African-American men for a radio documentary series I was producing on the Great Migration, a northern exodus of 1.5 million African American men and women who had fled the oppression of the American south during the First World War and its aftermath. When I arrived I met James Plunkett, who was then eighty-seven,

and Joseph Whitehead, who was eighty-nine. Both had come north during the First World War.

Over the next two hours James and Joseph shared stories about life in the South, work for the Pennsylvania Railroad and Baldwin Locomotive works, and their first impressions of Philadelphia. The high point of the interview came when James launched into a series of boastful tales about his youthful sexual exploits, complete with recreated dialogue. By June 1983 I had already completed more than 180 interviews with elderly Philadelphians from a wide

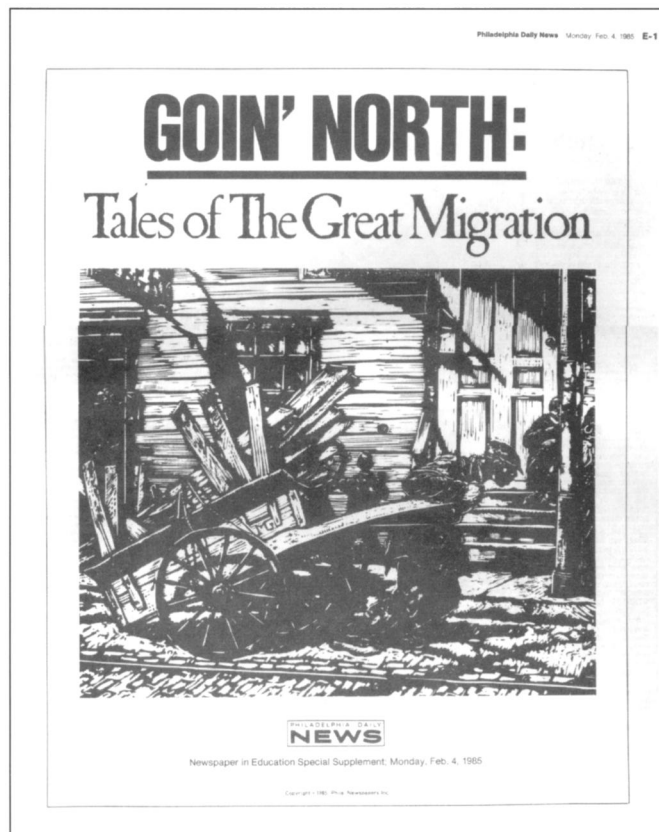
variety of backgrounds. James' recollections were filling in a major vacuum in my research, for he was the first person to share detailed, first person accounts of drinking, gambling, and womanising.

One of the most important social divisions within the black urban world of the early twentieth century had been between 'respectables' and 'sports'. James was the most talkative sport I had ever found, or would ever interview. In the next two years I interviewed James two more times. Each time he entertained me with additional stories from his errant youth. I learned that as a greenhorn in the city he had been a victim of the infamous crib game, that he had carried a black jack and a pistol to protect himself, that he shot at a man from a moving car, and that his attempts to become a bootlegger ended before they began when two Italians informed him that all black men have big mouths, and that they would rather keep him as a friend than have to kill him. He told me about his attraction to white women, the time he taunted a dozen Irish toughs after they chased him from their Gray's Ferry neighbourhood back into black South Philadelphia, and about nights spent in the gambling dens and night clubs of black Philadelphia's celebrated Gold Coast. It was in our second interview that James also reflected on consequences of his misspent youth.

Well I would've been better off if I had stayed at home. I'd have been better off. I didn't make too much money down there, but what I made, I'd have saved. I wouldn't be running around, spending all my money buying liquor. I'd have saved it. By now maybe I'd have my own place. Family would've been grown up and gone to themselves [...] But after I got here and fooling around with my brother-in-law, and knowing a gang of people from down home, I just stuck. If I had gone back home, I'd have been better off [...] I was led astray by temptation.<sup>1</sup>

James' analysis of his early life made a deep impression on me, especially the words 'I was led astray by temptation'. Had he stayed back home he would now have had a family, a nice little house, and some security. Instead, he lived in a small room in the house of a niece who had taken him in, and fled each Wednesday to the Open Door Senior Center for some companionship and conversation.

James was one of the featured interviewees in *Goin' North: Tales of the Great Migration*, a series of five, half-hour oral history sound documentaries that I produced in 1985. Part of a

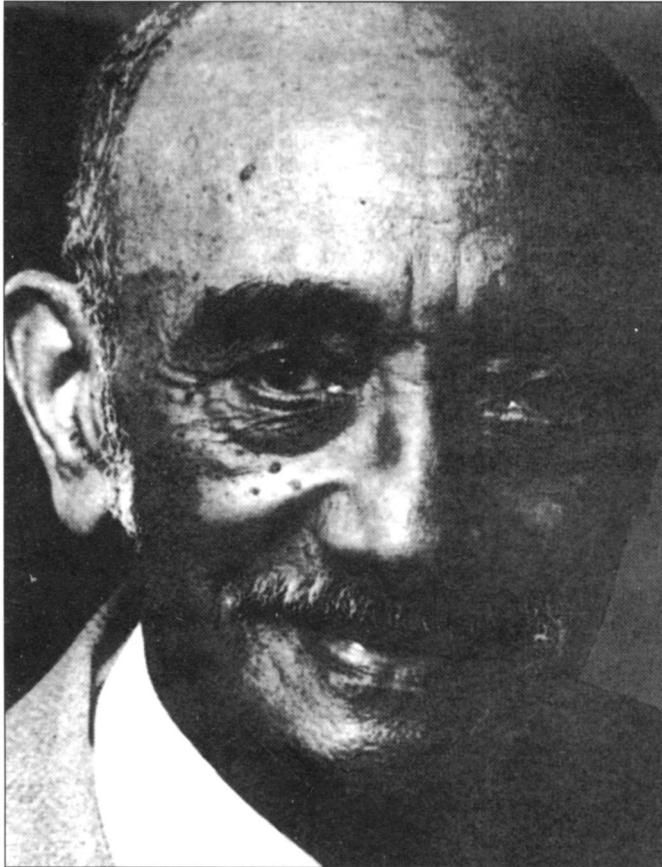


broader based public history project administered by Philadelphia's Atwater Kent Museum, the broadcasts of the series on public radio in Philadelphia were coordinated with the release of a twenty-page educational supplement that included complete transcriptions of each programme, historical photographs, photographs and brief biographies of the interviewees, and 'how-to' sections on collecting photos and conducting oral histories. The Philadelphia Daily News sold 21,000 copies to area teachers and their students who then used them in conjunction with the twice weekly broadcasts.<sup>2</sup>

#### MORDECAI MORDANT'S CELEBRATED AUDIO EPHEMERA

The great challenge of aural historians who work with sound documents is how to frame and interpret historical scholarship in an audio form. By the time I finished *Goin' North*, I had become dissatisfied with the formulaic feature pieces and radio documentaries I heard – and produced – for American public radio. I had always been fascinated by the historically evocative power of old recordings, elderly voices, and other sound artifacts. Wanting to do something more free form and creative, I decided to

*Goin' North*, a twenty-page educational supplement in the Philadelphia Daily News that included complete transcriptions of each program, historical photographs, photographs and brief biographies of the interviewees, and 'how-to' sections on collecting photos and conducting oral histories.



Hughsey-Childes.  
Photograph: Donnie  
Roberts.

produce a series of brief, concentrated audio immersions into the past. Rather than follow a predictable linear format I wanted to organise the pieces in a loosely thematic fashion, layering voices and sounds to the point of over-saturation and withholding identification of whom or what was being listened to. By breaking the narrative convention and cutting the sound documents loose from their contextual moorings, I wanted to focus greater attention on the sound elements themselves and hoped that the juxtapositions would be unconventional yet congenial enough to infuse a renewed vitality to old sounds. The pieces did not have to be logical or coherent or scholarly. All they had to do was hold the amused or befuddled listener's attention for five to eight minutes. If it all worked, the pieces would stimulate a listener's curiosity and hold their ears in spite of the effort, sometimes quite great, required to decipher certain of the recordings and voices.

In 1986 I received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to produce *Mordecai Mordant's Celebrated Audio Ephemera*, a series of highly produced, five-minute 'audio curiosity cabinets' composed of excerpts from oral history interviews, sound

effects, and archival recordings that I loved but had never had an opportunity to use. While producing *Goin' North* I had acquired dozens of gospel, comedy, jazz, and other phonograph recordings from the 1910s and 1920s. One of the most intriguing of these was a spoken-word recording of the great African-American writer James Weldon Johnson reading his 1927 poem, 'The Prodigal Son'. For one of the pieces in the *Mordecai Mordant* series I decided to combine Johnson's poem and other African-American recordings with James' and other black migrants' stories. What astonished me as I began to work on the piece was how closely James' telling of his own life story corresponded to this biblical tale. With remarkable ease the script took shape.<sup>3</sup>

### TRANSCRIPTION OF 'THE PRODIGAL SON'

*Hughsey Childes:* Privilege and opportunity is a beautiful thing to have, but it's bad when you don't know how to use it.

*James Weldon Johnson:* The Prodigal Son. In which the old time preacher pronounces a warning to sinners. Young man, young man, smooth and easy is the road that leads to Hell and destruction. Down grade all the way. The further you travel the faster you go. No need to trudge and sweat and toil. Just slip and slide and slip and slide till you bang up against Hell's iron gate. And the younger son kept travelling along until at nighttime he came to a city and the city was bright and the nighttime like day, the streets all crowded with people. Brass bands and string bands were playing, and everywhere the young man turned there was singing and laughing and dancing. And he stopped a passerby and he said, 'Tell me what city is this?' The passerby laughed and said, 'Don't you know? This is Babylon. Babylon. That great city of Babylon. Come on my friend and go along with me.' And the young man joined the crowd.

[Musical bridge, James Europe recording; SFX of street party]

*Ernest Grimes:* You soon find the wrong things in the city. You really do. Instead of going back to school and having ambition to do something so I could be somebody, I got involved in all kind of things like gambling and sporting and running around. My mother would be home and wondering where I am, but that wouldn't bother me. I would gamble all night.

[Musical bridge, 'Down in the Alley']

*James Weldon Johnson:* And the young man went with his new found friend and he bought himself some brand new clothes and he spent his days in the drinking den, wallowing in the fires of hell. And he spent his nights in the gambling den, throwing dice with the devil for his soul. And he met up with the women of Babylon. Oh the women of Babylon...

[Musical bridge]

*James Plunkett:* Well, you would go from house to house on Sundays. We'd just go into this house and buy a drink and go to the next house. All the houses have women sitting back there, all dressed up, all dressed to kill. 'Oh Honey. Can I have a drink?' 'You buy me a drink, Baby?' And then we'd leave that house and go from house to house buying drinks and having a good time. And around twelve, one o'clock at night, real late, we would cut out for home and go home and go to bed, empty broke.

*Johnson:* Oh the women of Babylon, dressed in purple and yellow and scarlet, loaded with rings and earrings and bracelets, their lips like honey comb dripping with honey, perfumed and sweet smelling like a jasmine flower, and the jasmine smell of the Babylon women got in his nostrils and went to his head and he wasted his substance in riotous living in the evening and the black and dark of night with the sweet sinning women of Babylon.

*Plunkett:* Well I got here in Philadelphia those girls were talking to me. 'Come on James. Ain't you sleepy? Let's lay down.' Well I know'd when she said that what's up, you know. I lay down there. That's all I wanted.

[Musical bridge]

*Plunkett:* One night they were having a party downstairs and I had just come up from down home. I didn't know about no party. I went on and got into bed and went to sleep. Well, I woke up there one night and there was a high yellow laying on that side, and there was another high yellow. I said, 'Lookee here. I'm seeing things.' Look again. 'Oooooohhh!' Then I know'd the girls. Ooooh! They were in the bed with me. I rolled over on the one. Finished. And rolled over on the other. All night. They named me



the young bull. I had come from down South all that time and hadn't had nothing, so I wore both of them out.

*James Plunkett.*  
*Photograph: Donnie Roberts.*

*Johnson:* Oh sinner when you're mingling with the crowd in Babylon, drinking the wine of Babylon, running with the women of Babylon, you forget about god and you laugh at death. Today you've got the strength of a bull in your arms and the strength of a bear in your legs, but some of these days, some of these days, you'll have a hand to hand struggle with bony death and death is bound to win.

[Musical bridge, 'Hot Bones and Rice']

*Plunkett:* So she said 'Come on, let's go upstairs.' We went upstairs. She said, 'I'm gonna shut this door. I'm gonna lock it. See this key?' She turned the key. 'Nobody in here but you and I.' All right. She pulled off... got into bed. And the way she done it, when they was at it, you know, she used to pull the cover over her head and commence to holler, make a lot of noise and holler, like he was doing so much good she couldn't

help from hollering. That's the time he was getting the money. And they robbed him and got his money while he was in bed.

*Johnson:* And they stripped him of his money and they stripped him of his clothes, and they left him broke and ragged in the streets of Babylon. Young man, come away from Babylon, that Hell border city of Babylon. Leave the dancing and gambling of Babylon, the wine and whiskey of Babylon. The sweet mouthed women of Babylon. Fall down on you knees and pray in your heart I will arise and go to my fathers.

[Sound bridge. Black church service from the 1920s]

*Plunkett:* Well I would've been better off if I had stayed at home. I'd have been better off. I didn't make too much money down there, but what I made, I'd have saved. I wouldn't be running around, spending all my money buying liquor. I'd have saved it. By now maybe I'd have my own place. Family would've been grown up and gone to themselves... But after I got here and fooling around with my brother-in-law, and knowing a gang of people from down home, I just stuck. But if I had gone back home, I'd have been better off... I was led astray by temptation.

*Johnson:* Listen to the Lord's prayer. Lord have mercy on proud and dying sinners. Sinners hanging over the mouth of Hell who seem to love their distance well. Lord, ride by this morning. Mount your milk white horse and ride here this morning. And in your ride, ride by old Hell, ride by the dingy gates of Hell and stop poor sinners in their headlong plunge. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

#### **TRAP DOORS AND PAINTED WOMEN**

From James Plunkett, Leon Grimes, and other black men I learned the story of the Prodigal Son. From the black women who had made the trip north during the same era I heard a different story, for while men could be led astray by temptation and then return to the safety of church and home, women paid for their dalliances in Babylon with death. I knew from the historical literature that young blacks preparing for their first trips north received advice and warnings from their parents and from local whites: the former to protect them, the latter to scare them into remaining part of the captive labour force of the American South. Parents advised their children to bring all their warm clothes. Whites warned them that the

north was so cold that black people couldn't live up there; that they would get sick and die. Parents told their children that the first thing they needed to do was to find a church and stay away from bad influences. Whites warned them that they weren't wanted up north and that they would be better off back home. In September of 1983, while interviewing three elderly black seamstresses at the International Ladies Garment Workers Union headquarters in Philadelphia, I heard the following story about the warnings that they had received before their trips north.

Hattie Alexander: My mother told me when I came here, she said 'Don't walk close to the...

Annabelle White: ...walls...

Hattie: ...walls because they have trap doors and you would fall in or someone would pull you in and we would never see you again. [Laughter].

Annabelle: That's right.

Hattie: I was afraid to go into people's houses and work on account of that. They say like the doctors, the doctors would get you.

Annabelle: Right.

Hattie: Because they wanted to ah...

Annabelle: Experiment on you...

Hattie: Experiment on you and you would never go... they said they would wear sneakers... soft shoes, so you couldn't hear them walk. And you would have to be very careful because the doctors would get you. This is what we were told. If you go to work... So many people would go to work in people's houses or work in their home and say when they walk in, once they got you in there, say you were the type of person that they were looking for, they would keep walking and say a trap door would open and you would fall in the basement and you would never be seen again. So you got to be very careful when you go to Philadelphia. And I was scared to death.

Annabelle: So was I.<sup>5</sup>

Interviewing for *Goin' North* I would hear variations of the trap door story from women and men from up and down the Atlantic seaboard. One of sixteen children born to a Virginia sharecropper, Fannie Hutchinson came to Philadelphia in 1926 to live with an uncle.

I heard one story from a woman from North Carolina who had been warned to stay close to the church; don't go out with people you don't know. Oh, well, they'd tell you that. You had to be careful because people would,

what then they used to call... What did they call them? Witch doctors or something they used to say would take the girls away and then they would tell you, they used to kill the girls and take them to the hospital and experiment on them. Student doctors. That's what they used to call them.

*Interviewer:* You did hear that story?

*Fannie:* Yeah. Yeah. That's why my uncle was afraid. Because I know that two or three girls who went away, right here in Philadelphia, didn't come... nobody found them. Because I was always afraid... You know the grates in the street? And they used to say you would walk on them and go down and nobody would ever see you, and I would walk, and even now I don't feel... I wouldn't walk on the grates in the street. Yeah. I was warned of that. They always say that people would lead you astray and I was warned about that.<sup>6</sup>

Fannie's uncle was so afraid of the trap doors that he refused to allow her to work outside of West Philadelphia, the section of the city in which they lived. After hearing that young girls were disappearing after classes he also denied her permission to attend night school at the corner of 16th and Wharton Street in South Philadelphia. At the age of seventy-two, Smart Boyd, a resident of Philadelphia for more than fifty years, still avoided stepping on grates. 'I was told that kind of stuff'. Smart told me. 'So I didn't walk on cellar doors either. And I still don't! [Laughter] That part of it is no better yet. You don't know what you're going to do when you get out there. You know that? You don't know where you're going to wind up at'.<sup>7</sup>

So where did these trap door stories come from? How widespread were they? How long did they persist? In my interviewing I had stumbled upon a fascinating urban legend about the origins and history of which I knew nothing. But alas, in 1985 I did not know what to do with these stories, and I was much more interested in learning more about the 'bright lights' – especially from a woman's perspective – than I was about tracking down the history of urban legends.

For years afterwards I looked for a black woman who would share her own stories about commercial vice in Philadelphia. I was especially eager to learn about prostitution, an occupation and a vocation of tremendous economic importance to African Americans, and one widely practiced by black women in Philadelphia. From historian Roger Lane's study of black crime in the late nineteenth century I had learned that

perhaps twenty-five per cent of all African-American women in the city turned tricks at one point or another in their lives. Historian Mark Haller estimated an even higher percentages among black women in early twentieth-century Chicago.<sup>8</sup>

The closest I ever got to a black sporting woman was ninety-one-year-old Louise Smith, whom I interviewed in September 1984, in the same South Philadelphia apartment she had lived in since 1926. In 1910 at the age of seventeen, Louise had come north to work as a domestic in Philadelphia. Four years later, while working as a nanny with a family summering in Atlantic City, a friend from back home tried to coerce her into exchanging sex for money. Louise told the story of her resistance to this and other pressures and temptations in great detail, and credited her parental training for protecting her from sin. 'I must say I had a Christian mother and father. And my mother taught us to keep out of bad company and then you would keep out of trouble'. Later in that same interview Louise told me about the time she bought a gun and was going to kill her philandering husband when the hand of God pushed her down upon her knees and made her repent.<sup>9</sup>

Louise also told the story of two young girls from back home whose encounters with the bright lights ended less happily. Lenore Austen and Lydia Daniels had also come north. Lydia lived on 17th Street with her mother's brother, a dentist named Overby. When he died, she moved to New York, married a fellow, entered the world of the bright lights, and was soon carried back home 'in a box'. Lenore, too, suffered the same sad fate.

#### **AN ARTICLE UNWRITTEN**

So what did all of this mean? Well, some of it I could make sense of. I had read enough nineteenth century novels and plays to know that in the popular imagination young women of all races typically paid for sin with their lives. But a historical explanation of African-American stories about trap doors, prodigal sons, and painted women remained a mystery to me until I decided in 1992 to write them up in a scholarly article. Only then did I discover that back in 1975 folklorist Gladys-Marie Fry in a book titled *Night Riders in Black History* had explained the origin, history, and meaning of the body-snatcher stories told in black American communities between the 1880s and 1930s.<sup>10</sup>

According to Fry, these stories were based both in fact, for a shortage of corpses had led medical schools to contract with grave robbers for black corpses, and in fiction, for southern whites had attempted to scare their black servants and workers into staying put by



convincing them that northern cities were even more dangerous than the southern countryside. The stories, according to Fry, expressed rural African-American fears of science and cities dominated by a dangerous and predatory white society. These fears were reinforced in the twentieth century by exposés of secret medical experiments that white doctors conducted on African Americans in studies that sometimes lasted for decades. The most infamous of these were the Tuskegee syphilis experiments in which doctors in Alabama used poor blacks without their knowledge to track the progress of syphilis.<sup>11</sup>

Through reading religious historian Arthur Paris's 1982 study, *Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World*, I was able to make better sense of James' and Louise's life narratives. Paris explained how African Americans who were raised in an evangelical, Pentecostal world continued to understand their lives in biblical terms even when they strayed from the church. When James and other young black men left home and spent their time in saloons rather than churches, they did not abandon the world-view learned in their childhood, a world-view that promised the strayed sinner the opportunity to be saved and forgiven.<sup>12</sup>

From Ron Grele, Alessandro Portelli, and Martine Burgos, I gained a greater understanding of the connection between individual and social existence and identity, and of the internal logic of an interviewee's life story. 'Life story', Burgos explained, 'expresses stages of necessary separation of the subject from the group which precedes voluntary, controlled reinstatement into the group'.<sup>13</sup> These scholars reminded me of the 'hidden intentionality' by which the interviewee disarms and captivates the attention of the interviewer, and by which autobiographical fragments elicited during an oral history interview come to make sense in their relationship to a coherent narrative, a narrative in which they construct their own life stories in the model of separation and search for reunion encoded in many Christian myths. In producing 'The Prodigal Son', all I had done was reconnect fragments of autobiography, music, and poem into the fictionally unified genre of 'life story'.

### THE VALUE OF AURAL HISTORY

I never did write my article on trap doors, painted women, and prodigal sons. Why reiterate what other scholars had already explained so well? The research did, however, teach me a number of valuable lessons; especially about my limitations as a historian. Raised an atheist I had little means of understanding how evangelical Christianity provided the templates within which black migrants plotted their own life stories. Trained as a historian I knew nothing about the

folklorists who had already studied and made sense of a cycle of stories that I had happened upon but could not explain. The father of a son now twenty-one and a daughter now nineteen, I have given my own parental advice on the temptations that lie in wait in the bright lights of Babylon, and the consequences of sin; advice tempered and informed by the words of Louise and James.

Professionally, my aborted study of trap doors, prodigal sons, and painted women reinforced my commitment to interview broadly and to pay as much attention to how people make sense of their lives as to how their recollections shed greater light on the history about which I am interviewing them. How I would love, now that I am fifteen years older and wiser, to be able to go back and re-interview James and Louise, but they and almost all of the more than 100 people I interviewed for *Goin' North* are now dead. So my understanding shall go no further, and in this subfield of African-American historical scholarship I have little to add. What I did have, however, that most other scholars did not, were the voices of the people I interviewed and a collection of little-known African-American sound documents from the time of my interviewees' youths. And it is these ghost voices and sound artifacts that for me bring to life this lost world; that time when rural African Americans began their great migration into the modern world of white science and cities and the commercialised vice and leisure industries that thrived within the industrial metropolises of the urban north.

James, Louise, and the thousands of others who joined the great northern migration may soon all be gone. But we still have artifacts of some of the sounds they produced during their lives. Sonic traces of their lives remain hardened in the grooves of shellacked bakelite disks recorded in the early decades of the twentieth century. Other traces are encoded in the electromagnetic signals imprinted on the chromium oxide particles of the analog cassette tapes I recorded in the 1980s.

Sound has an extraordinary ability to transport us instantaneously through time and space. Our voices and music carry so much meaning, emotion, and history, lost when human vocalisations and other forms of sound communication are converted to notes, letters, and words on a printed page. When I produced 'The Prodigal Son' back in 1985, there were few venues for the presentation of aural histories. The best I could hope for was one or two broadcasts on a limited number of public radio stations. Today, however, the internet and other emerging digital media provide a permanent home for aural histories. Creating a unified docuverse of written words,

still and moving images and sounds, computers and the internet also offer aural historians unprecedented opportunities to author in multiple media; to compose with voices, music, ambiences, and other sound artifacts as well as with, or rather than with written words. They already permit those who read this article, published on paper in an academic journal, to hear the voices that I recorded in the early 1980s and the montage that I produced.

Created in 1996 by Gerald Zahavi, a professor of history at the State University of New York Albany, *Talking History*, <http://www.talkinghistory.org> is both a weekly broadcast/internet radio programme, and an online archive of aural histories available via Real Audio as

streaming audio files. Each week the editors add new programmes to this ever-expanding archive of history in sound. In 2000, *Talking History* began to introduce individual websites for authors of histories in sound, including award-winning sound documentarians David Isay and Dan Collison. Here, browsers from around the world may link into a virtual archive of aural histories. By going to my web page on the *Talking History* website, <http://www.talkinghistory.org/hardy/html> the readers of this journal may also hear 'The Prodigal Son', as well as the programmes in *Goin' North: Tales of the Great Migration*, the five-part radio documentary series for which I recorded the interviews with James, Fannie, and others.

#### NOTES

1. Interview with James Plunkett, born in Danbury, Virginia in 1896, recorded by Charles Hardy, 11 March 1984.

2. The *Daily News* published the supplement on 4 February 1985. American Public Radio distributed the radio series nationally in 1994. Interviews from the *Goin' North* project have been featured in a number of other venues, including the American Social History Project's *Who Built America?* CD-Rom, (The Voyager Company, 1993), and the National Museum of American History's exhibit, 'From Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915-1940', the Museum's first permanent exhibit on African-American history.

3. I distributed *Mordecai Mordant's Celebrated Audio Ephemera* via the National Public Radio satellite in 1986. In addition to 'The Prodigal Son', the series of seven, five-minute modules included pieces on early radio, horse-drawn fire engines and milk trucks, boxing, and immigrant impressions of the United States. In keeping with the spirit of the project, I produced the pieces in mono. In retrospect this was a mistake, for the noisiness of the old recordings prevented the depth of layering and the distancing and separation of sounds that I had desired.

4. The poem appears in James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones*, New York: The Viking Press, 1927. This transcription does not include the lyrics of the songs or other spoken words recordings I used in the piece.

5. Interview with Hattie Alexander, born in Greenwood, South Carolina in 1900, and Annabelle White, born in South Carolina; recorded by Charles Hardy, 28 September 1983.

6. Interview with Fannie Hutchinson, born in rural Virginia in 1905; recorded by Charles Hardy, 25 June 1984.

7. Interview with Smart Boyd, born in Florida in 1912; recorded by Charles Hardy, 2 March 1984.

8. Roger Lane, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia, 1860-1900*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, pp 158-59; conversation with Mark Haller, 2 February 1986.

9. Interview with Louise Smith, born in Granville County, North Carolina in 1893; recorded by Charles Hardy, 24 September 1984.

10. Gladys-Marie Fry, *Night Riders in Black History*, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1975.

11. On the Tuskegee experiments see James H

Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment - a Tragedy of Race and Medicine*, New York: The Free Press, 1981, and Susan Reverby, *Tuskegee's Truths: Rethinking the Tuskegee Syphilis Study*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Medical experiments on African Americans were not limited to the rural South. Dermatologists used black inmates in Philadelphia's Holmesburg prison as medical guinea pigs from the mid-1950s until 1974. See Allen Hornblum, *Acres of Skin: Human Experiments at Holmesburg Prison: A True Story of Abuse and Exploitation in the Name of Medical Science*, New York: Routledge, 1998.

12. Arthur E Paris, *Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982.

13. Martine Burgos, 'Life Stories, Narrativity, and the Search for the Self,' (research paper presented at the Research Unit for Contemporary Culture, University of Jyväskylä, 27 April 1988), p 14; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991; and Ron Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, Chicago: Precedent Publishing, Inc, 1975.