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Discursive Sites of Production and Opposition: Post World War I Popular Music Scene in Britain

Samraghni Bonnerjee

Independent Researcher, Kolkata

Abstract

The post World War I British music scene was varied, spanning several genres, from croon, swoon, jazz, blues, to swing – with influences both home-grown as well as imported. New dances, jazz music, and cocktail parties were continuously being imported from America, aided by the popularity of American cinema, which shaped the form of leisure activities of Britain throughout the Twenties and Thirties. However, the conservative response to these forms of music was strict, and post War society was involved with means of trespassing the restrictions and legislations. This paper intends to look at the genres of popular music and their spatial sites of performance – dance halls and ball rooms in England as well as the English colonies – as discursive sites of production and resistance.

[**Keywords:** World War I, Britain, popular music, dance halls, spatial sites, restriction]

By the time Roy Fox and Lew Stone, the bandleaders of the Monseigneur Restaurant in London would fall out over the contract details of the crooner Al Bowlly during the Depression of the early 1930s, the British Dance Band scene would have had a long and involved history, having endured many controversies after the First World War (1914—1918). Post World War I music spanned several genres, from croon, swoon, jazz, blues, to swing. This paper intends to look at the post War popular music scene in Britain, and understand the nature of the oppositions, legislations, and approvals it faced, leading to its eventual legitimisation. My analysis would be informed by political and historical contextualisation and Critical Discourse Analysis. For the purpose of this paper I shall be looking at public spaces like dance clubs, dance halls, cinema houses, and hotels in the colonies, as discursive sites of production and resistance to the genres of popular music.

‘I’m Looking on the Bright Side of Life’¹: Socio-Economic Reasons for Diverse Leisure Activities

‘The Roaring Twenties’ has always been an unfair attribute to the decade succeeding the Great War, capturing only a partial view of the preferences of the masses. Britain at the time was in fact beleaguered by war losses, rationing, and grief, trying to overcome the past with newer forms of revelry. It is important to remember that to facilitate the emergence of such a rich variety of leisure engagements after the War, and particularly the popularity of the idea of ‘leisure’ itself, several economic policies from the preceding decades were responsible. By the turn of the twentieth century British employers began to put holidays on a more formal and regular basis. Bank holidays and half-day holidays on

Saturdays had already been introduced by the late Victorian period, and workers were entitled to a week's unpaid leave during summer.² The granting of leaves and holidays can be read as a discursive strategy on the part of the employers for the maintenance of control: by providing fixed temporal sites for the workers to relax, they guaranteed the return of the workers on the first working day. Indeed, what had originally prompted the employers to fix holidays on a formal and regular basis was the failure of workers to turn up for work every Monday after heavy drinking bouts over the weekend. By appropriating a fixed time for the carnivalesque, the employers were merely exercising their social power. By 1914, the prospect of additional free time, an increase in purchasing capacity among the consumer masses, and the broadening of commercial interests resulted in the booming of several leisure activities. Radios and gramophones became more commonplace, as did cinemas, and more people could afford to smoke and drink in earnest, enough to earn the wrath of the prudent Victorian 'improvers' of society. Hence the idea of 'enjoyment' as a means of rigorous self-improvement changed with the availability of more disposable time and income at hand.

'Make-Believe Island'³: Cinema, Cinema Houses and Music

The combined phenomenon of increase in disposable income, sanctioned holidays, and rise in the number of cinema houses made going to the cinema a popular form of entertainment. Although British critics were fiercely dismissive of the American movies, and optimistic about the British film industry, the sheer number of American productions and their clever marketing skills – from block booking to buying up cinema houses in the continent – outshone their British counterparts. The Prince of Wales's November 1923 inauguration of what were called 'British Film Weeks', in which British films were to have the preference on British screens, symbolised the fact that watching the cinema was not restricted to the working classes. During the silent period, even the poorest cinema provided its own music: it was usually an ex-music mistress who played a piano through the length of the film and tried to suit the melody to the mood. When it was finally possible to incorporate musical pieces into the films, the songs became immensely popular, even to be picked up by dance bands and performed in restaurants and dancehalls. Hence when Bertram Wooster (in the televised series *Jeeves and Wooster*, adapted from P. G. Wodehouse's stories involving the self-same characters) sings 'Goodnight Vienna' from his memory one morning, after having listened to it in the film of the same name the previous night, the makers of the series are not making a gross historical inaccuracy.⁴ The 1932 British film directed by Herbert Wilcox featured the song, which became instantly famous, so much so that the crooner Al Bowlly (1898—1941) too made a recording of the song in the same year.

'Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On'⁵: The American Invasion of British Popular Culture

While in the preceding sections I talk about the circumstances that led to the development of a distinct brand of popular culture after the First World War, in this

section I would focus on the nature of that popular culture. J. B. Priestley's disparagement of the mass culture that he said had swamped Britain during this time, captures the disillusionment of the intelligentsia with the emerging popular culture, and might try to show the gulf between 'high' and 'popular' culture in this period. George Orwell notes in *The Lion and the Unicorn* that "It is a rather restless, cultureless life, centring around tinned food, *Picture Post*, the radio and the combustion engine."⁶ However, on 15 June 1920, the opera singer Dame Nellie Melba's singing of 'Australian Nightingale' in front of a microphone, that would broadcast it from the depths of the Chelmsford studio across the airwaves to the very radios of which Orwell was so critical, proves that perhaps this period was not solely philistine in its tastes.⁷ The advance of popular culture did not mean a steady decline in the more erudite forms of art.

Incidentally during this time, an invasion of a different kind was happening in Britain, which would have lasting effects on its cultural and leisure activities. The American invasion of high society England had been steadily happening for decades: Henry James had consistently recorded it in his novels throughout the mid- and late nineteenth century. However, new dances, jazz music, and cocktail parties were continuously being imported from America, aided by the popularity of American cinema, which shaped the form of leisure activities of Britain throughout the Twenties and Thirties. Yet just like the Duchess of York, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon's transmutation of the cocktail drink into 'drinkie-poos' (for the former being too American), most of the imports underwent inherent changes in their character.⁸

At the turn of the century, Britain had its own classical composers in the forms of Elgar, Holst, and Vaughan Williams. In addition the British regularly imported elite French, Italian, and German music. However, before the 1890s the only musical import associated with North America was blackface minstrelsy, and this was followed by the songs of Tin Pan Alley, ragtime, jazz, and a variety of other popular styles. Post War, prolific American band leaders such as Roy Fox (1901—1982) and Ray Noble (1903—1978) began performing in Britain and their popularity effectively changed performance of popular music in the country. Band leaders dominated ballrooms in hotels as well as the record industry, belting out popular numbers from cinemas as well as new songs written by their members. Ray Noble's music bridged the gap from Paul Whiteman, the American King of Jazz, to Benny Goodman. His band also boasted of members/imports like Glenn Miller. It was against this complex cultural environment that British dance bands emerged, not entirely free from the mixing of elite and popular styles.

'Top Hat, White Tie and Tails': Jazz Clubs, Dances, and the Upper Classes OR Race, Class, and Gender

The popular music of the times was now an indigenous form, with American and British attributes. This heterogeneous nature of music earned wrath from people in power. In the following two sections I would like to concentrate on the power-control exercised by the dominant members of the society, and how the structures and strategies of their dominance pertained to both actions and cognition. By 'people in power' I refer solely to individuals who had privileged access to law regulations and enforcements. This left out a

considerable section of the wealthy upper-classes who, incidentally, through their own acts, vociferously supported the hedonism.

The common epithets attributed to jazz in the Press ranged from 'Night in the Jazz Jungle' to 'Jazzmania'. The major contention against the jazz enthusiasts seemed to be the ease with which the latter moved between assumed gender roles, and their historical disregard for convention. As a features editor of *Daily Mail* described:

"Women dressed as men, men as women, youth in bathing drawers and kimonos. Matrons moving about lumpily and breathing hard. Bald, obese perspiring men. Everybody terribly serious; not a single laugh, or the palest ghost of a smile. Frantic noises and the occasional cries of ecstasy came from half a dozen negro players. Dim lights, drowsy odours, and futurist drawings on the walls and ceiling."¹⁰

Clearly for this features editor, a jazz club was the supreme site of transgression, where men and women refused to conform to accepted gender roles. He sexualised matrons who were not supposed to indulge in vigorous dances anymore, as much as middle-aged men. His objection to the scene was oxymoronic, because he found both the silence as well as the cries of ecstasy disturbing. This scene could be contrasted with the scene in any site of high culture. The deathly silence and dim lights of a concert hall or opera theatre were reverent signs of elite art, and men and women dressed in exact signifiers of their gender, seated in their respective seats conform to the expectations of societal mores laid down for them.

The London jazz scene, which was already familiar with the foxtrot, moved from the 'Twinkle', the 'Jog Trot', and the 'Vampire', to the more novel (and 'erotic' to its critics) 'Missouri Walk', 'the Elfreda', the 'Camel Walk' and the immensely popular 'Shimmy'. Although the quieter 'Blues' was introduced in late 1923, the vigorous jerky steps of the 'Charleston' and the 'Black Bottom' dominated the scene. Another *Daily Mail* article denounced the Charleston as 'reminiscent only of Negro orgies'.¹¹ An irate clergyman noted that "the morals of the pigsty would be respectable in comparison" to the Hammersmith Palais de Dance, which opened its American-style jazz bands in 1919.¹²

Incidentally, every criticism of sexual transgression in the night clubs included the image of the 'negro'. The 'cries of ecstasy' observed by the earlier editor was further enhanced by the mention of 'orgies'. That 'orgies' could not take place without the presence of 'negroes' reified the Britisher's angst for and abjection of the 'coloured'. In the psyche of this editor, the juxtaposition of 'negro' with something as sexually deviant as 'orgies' showed the stereotyped fixture of blacks as the body, and the white colonisers as the mind. By stressing how different the 'negroes' were from the white through this body-mind dualism, the British was persistently 'Othering' the 'negro'. Importantly, the 'negro' had always been viewed as an American, or at least as coming from America. The disdain for America coupled with the Othering of the 'negro' manifested in the double marginalisation of popular music.

Despite the scathing indictment of the press and the people in power against the forms of popular music, the latter had full support from the upper sections of the society. Interestingly, it is important to remember that in its support, enactment, representation, and legitimisation of these popular forms of culture, the upper classes were practising a more covert form of dominance. Their participation in and approval of these forms of popular culture normalised the latter in the eyes of the masses. This influenced the latter's own preference for these forms. Edwina and Dickie Mountbatten led the patronage of nightclubs by the wealthy upper classes. They spent most evenings at the Embassy club in Bond Street, which was also frequented by the Prince of Wales on Thursdays. The latter had his own sofa, and the Duke of Kent regularly visited the same club, often accompanied by partners of either sex. The Grafton Galleries wanted its guests to wear gloves while dancing, but its incorporation of a 'Negro band' earned it slight disrepute among the puritans. The Kit-Kat Club at Haymarket was the most popular among such places. It earned Edwina's continued patronage, and because it catered to such exclusive clientele, it served dinner for the princely sum of fifteen shillings a head in 1925. Edwina Mountbatten's taste for variety and adventure also took her to the Rectors Club which was located in a cellar in Tottenham Court Road. Murray's, owned by the racketeer Jack May and located at the banks of the Thames at Maidenhead was another popular destination for the smart set. Its list of illustrious clients ranged from the film star and society beauty Lady Diana Manners to the world light-heavy-weight boxing champion Georges Carpentier. The easy availability of cocaine at Murray's was the main reason for its popularity. As noted by a visitor: "It was slipped to you in packets, very quickly, when you coughed up the loot."¹³ The Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and Gordon Selfridge, the retail magnate bequeathed their support to the 'Brighter London Society' in 1922, but it eventually fell under the ruthless restrictions of DORA.

'Let's Face the Music and Dance'¹⁴: Oppositions, Legislations and Dissidence

DORA or the Defence of the Realm Act passed on 8 August 1914, just before the War broke out became the official weapon for the dissenters after its end. The counter-discourse against this form of popular culture was voiced by Sir Herbert Nield at a meeting of the Lord's Day Observance Society in 1921, where he complained, "We have all gone recreation mad." In this section I would look at the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and dissent, and connect the relations between discourse structures and power structures. In his essay 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', Teun A. Van Dijk suggests approaching the analysis of socio-political inequality by "focusing on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance."¹⁵ Dominance can be ushered by not only the elite wealthy classes of society, but also by people with privileged access to law making. In the instances of popular culture in the Twenties, the relation between discourse structures and power structures were much more vigorous: the laws implemented were extremely strict, and often involved payment of huge fines, or a prison sentence.

Along with DORA, the Licensing Act of 1921 was introduced to curb the gaiety of the revellers. According to the Act, drink could not be served in bars and clubs after 12.30 at night.²² Between 1924 and 1929 the new puritanical Home Secretary Sir William Joynson-Hicks along with the commissioner of Metropolitan Police Lord Byng denounced the rising nightclub scene, and organised raids to shut them down. Denigrating the clubs as “a blot on the life of London”, he welcomed the Bishop of London’s deputation along with the council for the Promotion of Public Morality in February 1925. Joynson-Hicks wanted to have a list of approved nightclubs – opening at six in the evening and closing at one in the morning – to reinstate regular police inspection, and to close down illegal ones.¹⁶

Many well-known nightclubs were closed down and their proprietors fined or sent to prison by the methodical persistence of the police. However, the selfsame establishments reopened very soon by the methodical persistence of their proprietors, who quickly paid the fine against the tremendous profits made by them every night. The gossip of the raid on the Kit-Kat Club the very night the Prince of Wales had visited went around the nightclub circuit for a long time; and Joynson-Hicks convicted and deported the manager of ‘Chez Victor’.¹⁷

John Dryden’s one-time address 43 Gerrard Street was transformed into a notorious club, the ‘43’ by an equally infamous Mrs. Kate Meyrick, whose chase game with the police was a subject of nightclub banter. Her public prosecution happened in 1924 for selling intoxicants, and she was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, which she served in Holloway. Mrs. Meyrick followed each of her release from prison with a grand champagne party. After more raids and fines business appeared stable for Mrs. Meyrick, with the Cecil Club operating for four years without being raided, until it transpired that she was bribing a certain police Sergeant George Goddard who in return tipped her off before a possible raid.¹⁸

This extreme reaction of the authorities against the popular music forms of the time shows their inherent insecurity about modern epithets. To the critics, modern music symbolised moral decline, especially in its disordered and suggestive dancing. The new fashions that accompanied these dances broke down established gender barriers through women’s truncated styles which looked shockingly similar to male clothing. In every aspect the jazz dances clashed with the Edwardian waltzes and the German and Austrian oompah bands of the preceding decades. The journalistic reports on the activities of the nightclubs also fed to the horrors of the puritanical mind. One raid was reported as “COLOURED MAN’S CLUB . . . Black men and white girls mingling in a Bacchanalian setting.”¹⁹ When Uriah Erskine’s club in Whitfield Street was raided at 2 am on 30 November 1924, reports of unlicensed whisky, gin, champagne, beer, and stout on sale caused less outrage than police evidence of the dancing being “most objectionable from suggestive movement.” They reported seeing men and women caressing one another and a white woman sitting on a black man’s knees.²⁰

This report of the raid illustrates how power control pertains to cognition by not only limiting the freedom of action in others, but also influencing their minds. The police,

the Press, and the people who had implemented these rules had not only prevented women and black men from engaging in pleasure in their own ways, but also, with their vested powers of implementing law and informing people, had manipulated and persuaded the readers of the report through their form of reporting and talk that appears quite legitimate in its outrage.

‘Love Locked Out’²¹: Role Reversal and Forbidden Dances

In this section I attempt to show how the post War dance halls served as an important site for another kind of resistance to accepted societal principles. In a society where marriage was the only respectable option for a girl, and where a large number of the male population had been killed in the battlefields, the dance halls were the best place for women to meet available men. In these places, traditional gender roles and rules of courtship had been reversed: instead of men courting women, women were now yearning for the few available men. During the war male dance partners were in extreme short supply, and until demobilisation, it was acceptable for women to dance together. This incidentally provided the perfect cover for homosexuals to dance together to music traditionally meant for men to court women with.

The dance boom of the Twenties was symbolic of the need among young working class women to exert themselves in finding partners. The writer Barbara Cartland remembered the courage of many of her contemporaries who, though crushed by grief, “reddened their lips and [went] out to dance when all they loved most [had] been lost . . . They accepted death with a shrug of their shoulders.”²² This image of the reddening of the lips is reminiscent of images of warriors getting dressed for battle, and the compelling image symbolises competing femininities. The Locarno or the Palais were the popular haunts, where the girls danced in groups or waited to be asked by men. The situation was intense and desperate. The actor and writer Julian Fellowes recalls the story of his Aunt Isie, who was invited to a ball in London in 1919, a year after her husband succumbed to war wounds. On walking into the ballroom she realised that there were about ten women to every man – the survivors of the War – and the ballroom and the dance had assumed the character of war, with each woman vying for the attention of a man.²³ This was the most significant transgression of prescribed gender roles: one would assume that women leading men would be considered ‘manly’, and this very act was interpreted as a transgression.

After the Battle of Somme, hostesses sent out invitations to ‘Miss – and partner’, implying that the invited women would have to bring their own partners, contrary to the pre War habit of hostesses having their own list of ‘eligible’ men automatically invited to the balls.²⁴ In such situations blind dates became the norm for women who couldn’t afford to be choosy, and had to go to extreme lengths to secure a partner. The figure of the woman resorting to any means to secure a male partner for a dance clashed vividly with the expectations of society throughout history – demonstrated in several works from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* to Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* – where women were supposed to patiently await their turn to be asked by a male partner. In Rosamond

Lehmann's 1932 novel *Invitation to the Waltz*, Olivia and Kate Curtis's mother invites her friend's son to be a partner for her daughters in the Spencer's dance. At the waltz, Olivia dances with an ex-soldier who has been blinded during action, and now runs a chicken farm with his wife. In the desperation to secure a male partner, one had to overlook class distinctions and had to settle with anyone as long as the gender was male. It was precisely this unorthodox arrangement which led to the breakdown of class distinctions in the Twenties, as observed by Barbara Cartland, ". . . Society had ceased to have any meaning."²⁵

The women who were successful in their courtship eventually got married, but the disparity in the sex ratio meant that many women would remain spinsters. It was often the general belief that women who failed to get married would turn on one of their own sex for companionship. After the War, homosexuality seemed to be viewed as a second option for unmarried women to find love, rather than as something natural. In *The Long Week-End* (1941), a social history of Great Britain between 1918—1939, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge noted the increase in homosexuality in England with comparisons from Germany:

"In certain Berlin dance-halls, it was pointed out, women danced only with women and men with men. Germany land of the free! The Lesbians took heart and followed suit, first in Chelsea and St. John's Wood, and then in the less exotic suburbs of London . . . [They] were more quiet about their aberrations at first; but, if pressed, they justified themselves . . . by pointing out that there were not enough men to go round in a monogamous system."²⁶

Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, along with others like Marie Stopes, seemed to view homosexuality as deviant. On the other end of the spectrum lay the psychologist Esther Harding, whose approach was more apologetic. She felt that the 'rise' in lesbianism was due to the fact that career women found "all the men of their age already married . . .", implying that under such circumstances such deviancy could be excused, forgiven even.²⁷ Against such a background sprang the bohemian sub-culture of 1920s Britain. At the Cafe Royal, the Ham Bone Club, and the Cave of Harmony homosexual women could dance together unafraid, and found like-minded kinship in modernist poets, exhibitionists, cross-dressers, abstract expressionists, models and nightclub dancers. The cultural scene too was abuzz with them: the cellist Gwen Farrar, her stage partner the pianist Norah Blaney, American revue star Teddie Gerard, the American actress Tallulah Bankhead, the playwright Gabrielle Enthoven and of course Radclyffe Hall and Vita Sackville-West. This crowd rode motorcycles, cropped their hair, smoked jewelled pipes, and danced jazz. Each of these clubs provided the perfect alibi for the deviance of same-sex dance partners: the extreme dearth of men had made it necessary for women to dance with each other. Against this background, it would be interesting to note the popular songs played in hotel dance floors and dance clubs to heterosexual couples, being adapted within the confines of a homosexual club. After all, songs like 'It's Great to be in Love'²⁸ or 'Lover Come Back to Me'²⁹ need not necessarily be meant for heterosexual love; and songs like 'Mademoiselle'³⁰ could be dedicated by one woman to another, as much as by a man to a

woman. In keeping with the accepted mores of the time, dances with same-sex partners and homosexual love were viewed as major transgressions.

‘Haan Main American Jazz Kharidta Hun!’³¹: Music in the Colonies

While legislation and legitimation, opposition and dissent had filled the dance clubs and dance halls of Britain, the entertainment scene in the British colonies provided a different picture. In Paul Scott’s novel *The Day of the Scorpion* (1968), part of his tetralogy *The Raj Quartets*, Sarah Layton is taken to the Grand Hotel in Calcutta by the junior officer Jimmy Clark, a few years before the outbreak of the Second World War. Their evening is spent dancing in the ballroom to the accompanying music of a live jazz band.³² Paul Scott had of course captured the zeitgeist quite correctly. In this section I would look at the hotel ballrooms in British colonies as sites of production of popular music catering only to an exclusive set of people: the white colonisers and the westernised Indians. In the popular culture sphere in Britain, power structures had assumed the strategies of opposition. In the colonies however, performance of popular music was not illegal, and ironically, here, the discursive strategies of the people in power involved systematic shielding of the masses from access to popular British culture. However education and easier access to the records changed the dynamics of this power relation in the colonies quicker than the legislation-legitimation clauses could be changed in Britain.

Lequime’s Grand Hotel Orchestra for example, played in the Twenties, for the real-life counterparts of Paul Scott’s characters: British officers and wealthy Indians who could afford an evening at a premiere hotel. Here too the jazz band was multiethnic – led by a Canadian, and his sidemen who were from the Philippines, Austria, Mozambique, the US, and Russia – however, unlike Britain, it faced negligible opposition from the powerful factions. After a particular stint at the Grand Hotel Jimmy Lequime, the trumpet player, led his band to the HMV studios in Dum Dum, Calcutta, to record the first discs of ‘hot music’ – as jazz was known before the term became popular. The songs were titled *Soho Blues* and *The House Where the Shutters are Green*, and initially catered exclusively to the white patrons and Indians with privileged English education.

Before playing at the Grand, Lequime played in a Shanghai nightclub called Mumm House. The hedonistic taste of the upper classes in Shanghai had already made it a favourite spot for jazz musicians. At Mumm’s House Lequime’s band comprised the trombone player Nick Ampier from the Philippines (a former US colony, and hence with an unbridled access to American pop culture), the Russian Monia Liter (one among the many conservatory-trained ‘White Russian’ musicians who had travelled to Asian countries after the 1917 Russian revolution), the American drummer Bill Houghton, and his alto- and soprano sax playing, Al Jolson-style brash singing companion Pete Harmon. When Lequime was hired in the Grand Hotel at Calcutta, he supplemented his Shanghai band with Russian sax player Joe Speelman, American reedman Claude Macquire, and an Austrian Vic Halek who played both violin and alto sax. At Calcutta they were joined by Al Bowly. Nevertheless when Lequime travelled to Singapore for a stint at Raffle’s Hotel,

Al Bowlly quit their band and headed towards Europe, hoping to eventually perform and settle in Britain.

The subcontinent they were leaving behind was newly discovering jazz. It is important to remember that social power is based on privileged access to socially valued resources such as wealth, income, position, status, and education. The westernised Indians in big cities like Calcutta and Bombay, who had had access to the ballrooms of The Grand in late Twenties and early Thirties eventually ceased to be a novelty when English education became more popular as a means to get jobs. The newly English educated masses could access English records from stores, and their inaccessibility to the spatial and temporal sites of elegant hotel ballrooms was made redundant by their gramophones and records. By the late 1930s swing bands would perform in cantonment towns and railway colonies too, where many British officers were posted; and within a few years jazz musicians would form the bulk of the bands. India's insatiable thirst for jazz eventually became the subject of an international advertisement created by the EMI record company, which affirmed that Indians were buying American jazz: "*Haan main American jazz kharidta hun!*"

'Twentieth Century Blues'³³: Legitimising Popular Music

Popular culture is the best example of social cognition. Social cognitions mediate between macro- and micro- levels of society, between discourse and action, between the individual and the group. Social cognition informs our understanding of social events, of social institutions, and most importantly of power relations. Discourse communication and other forms of action and interaction are monitored by social cognition. Although embodied in the minds of individuals, social cognitions are social because they are shared and presupposed by group members, monitor social action and interaction, and because they underlie the social and cultural organisation of society as a whole. Thus social cognition links dominance and discourse. A study of the discursive strategies employed by the privileged people in the British society after the First World War, to monitor the growth and quality of the emergent popular culture, reveals the inherent securities of the makers of a nation fresh from a devastating war. The discursive strategies explained the production as well as the understanding and influence of dominant text and talk. The control of knowledge crucially shapes one's interpretation of the world: if the DORA would not have been made redundant by the late Twenties and persistently ignored, the popular music of Bert Ambrose (1896—1971) would have failed to arouse the morale of a nation that was entering another devastating war barely twenty years after the first one. The playing of the song "The Clouds Will Soon Roll By"³⁴ would barely serve its function of appealing to the patience of the mass of people who had been ruined by the Great Depression, if its production would have been wracked by criticism from the puritans. The unexpectedly large number of young people around 1918, who were born at the turn of the century, and – like Charles Ryder remarks in *Brideshead Revisited*³⁵ – were too young to fight in the Great War, had been the primary target group of the new form of music. Unsurprisingly this generation turned to romantic, escapist music with frivolous

lyrics, over the drawing-room ballads laced with the heavy tone of morality, duty and patriotism. Their preference eventually led to the dominance of a genre of music that had survived through devastating legislation solely on the basis of transgressions systematically performed by its supporters. These early hierophants would be free from the accusations of Adorno, who insisted in ‘Culture Industry Reconsidered’ that the production of the ‘culture industry’ only lulled the masses into passivity.³⁶

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30. Bowlly, Al. Mademoiselle. Ray Noble Orchestra. 1933. LP.
31. The EMI record company made this advertisement after the Second World War (1939—1945) for the burgeoning popularity of jazz among the Indian masses. The advertisement literally translates to “Yes, I buy American jazz!”

32. Scott, Paul. *The Day of the Scorpion*. London: Heinemann, 1966. Print.
33. Bowlly, Al. *Twentieth Century Blues*. Ray Noble Orchestra. 1931. LP.
34. Carlisle, Elsie. *The Clouds Will Soon Roll By*. Ambrose and His Orchestra, 1932. LP.
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Samraghni Bonnerjee is an independent researcher based in Calcutta. Her areas of interest are World War I, women's writing, and vintage music and cinema. She completed her MA in English Literature from the University of Calcutta in 2011, and is a trained editor. In January 2013 she was the Goethe Stipendiatin to Goethe Institut Berlin. She now teaches German as a foreign language in Calcutta.
