Work Requirements
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Introduction

1 McCoy, “Disabled and Disdained.”
2 Ritchie, “Local Incident Goes Viral.”
3 In this book, particularly in chapter 2, I use the word *begging* to describe a mode of solicitation in which practitioners self-consciously manipulate the pejorative connotations of that word and of the epithet *beggar*.
4 Ritchie, “Local Incident Goes Viral.”
5 Menafee, “A School Treasurer’s Story,” 152.
6 On ableist tropes of “overcoming,” see Shapiro, *No Pity*; Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*; Schalk, “Reevaluating the Supercrip”; Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. On Helen Keller’s relation to this trope, see Kleege, *Blind Rage*. Menafee’s personal narrative might seem but a pat celebration of self-help in much the same vein. But his concern with what today would be called workplace accommodation gives pause. Consider, for instance, how Menafee credits a donated typewriter with his improved prospects. “My success in life,” he writes, “depended largely upon my securing it.” Just as the typewriter was originally invented for blind people, neither was stenography an arbitrary career choice. It was one of the few fields open to disabled workers at the time and a job that reformers routinely pointed to in arguing that anyone—and any body—could find a place in the workforce. What begins as an intensely personal story of injury thus by the end becomes a representative tale of economic success. Menafee, “A School Treasurer’s Story,” 156.
7 In colloquial usage, *welfare* today usually refers (pejoratively) to federal programs that provide cash aid to poor single mothers and their children, namely Aid to Families with Dependent Children before 1996 and Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) afterward. Scholars of the welfare state, however, understand welfare far more broadly to include any number of government assistance programs. As Premilla Nadasen, Jennifer Mittelstadt, and Marisa Chappel suggest, this list might include “Old Age Assistance, Aid to the Disabled, Supplemental Security Income, Social Security, Medicaid
and Medicare, unemployment insurance, public housing, legal services, student grant programs, corporate bailouts, corporate subsidies, and food stamps. Some of these are programs targeted to the poor, but the nation's most generous social welfare measures—such as Social Security, Medicare, and veterans' benefits—are available to people regardless of income status.”

Nadasen, Mittelstadt, and Chappell, Welfare in the United States, 1.

As Judith N. Shklar writes, “Workfare [inaugurated by tanf] has nothing to do with economics. It is about citizenship, and whether able-bodied adults who do not earn anything actively can be regarded as full citizens.” Shklar, American Citizenship, 98.

As Noah Zatz writes, “Some state tanf programs focus exclusively on immediate paid private employment or on unpaid ‘work experience’ providing public services like cleaning parks (also known as ‘workfare’). Others emphasize a variety of professional services designed to improve future employability, including job training; education; and rehabilitative services addressing disability, substance abuse, or domestic violence. Still others allow similar activities under the rubric of ‘community service’ and also include unpaid care for sick or disabled family members, grandchildren, or foster children. Notwithstanding these varied approaches to unpaid work, tanf programs collectively differ from eitc [Earned Income Tax Credit], which includes only paid activities as work.” Zatz, “What Welfare Requires from Work,” 376.

In this book, I do not differentiate among terms like work, labor, or productivity in any hard-and-fast sense. To be sure, such distinctions are often crucial to the arguments that philosophers and activists make about the vagaries of human endeavor. This rich body of writing—glossed briefly later in this introduction—spans centuries, if not millennia, and certainly informs my thinking here. My goal, however, is not to develop a cohesive social theory or to document a particular set of historical practices. Rather, this book explores how and why definitional boundaries are drawn as they are in a given time and place and how these decisions give rise to formal conventions that traverse a range of cultural genres and media.

Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, 126.

Chamberlain, Undoing Work, Rethinking Community, 2. On automation, see Smith, Smart Machines and Service Work.

Weeks, The Problem with Work, 8.

For this reason, as legal historians have observed, people who enroll in social welfare programs that provide cash aid—even popular programs such as Social Security Disability Insurance—may face stigma for doing so. Claiming the social rights guaranteed by the welfare state may actually jeopardize
one’s social citizenship in the broader work society. See Bagenstos, “Disability, Universalism, Social Rights, and Citizenship.” Bagenstos draws on the distinction between social rights and social citizenship that T. H. Marshall lays out in *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays*.


20 Wilderson, “Gramsci’s Black Marx,” 238. Wilderson’s provocation is part of a broader agenda often described as an Afro-pessimist critique of racial capitalism. Approaching slavery as an ontological condition rather than a system of economic exploitation, Wilderson and other writers emphasize how notions of Black fungibility (rather than Black labor) define and organize Black value within ongoing relations of conquest. See King, *The Black Shoals*, 23. As Jackie Wang summarizes, “analyses that focus on how racism is incentivized by capitalism and instrumentalized for monetary gain can sidestep the intractable psychological dimension of racism.” Wang, *Carceral Capitalism*, 89. Dylan Rodríguez writes along similar lines: “Unlike the historical capitalist substructure, the schematic logics of white supremacy are not accumulation, surplus value, and labor exploitation, but are civilization (read in verb, not noun form), genocide, and incarceration.” Rodríguez, “Multiculturalist White Supremacy,” 41. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* offers a compelling retort to Afro-pessimist criticism of racial capitalism. Du Bois titles his chapter on slavery “The Black Worker,” leaving little doubt about his understanding of slavery and its relation to capitalism. See Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*. As Walter Johnson clarifies, for Du Bois the slave is “a subject, at once, of capital and of white supremacy.” Johnson, “To Remake the World.”

22 Svendsen, *Work*, 19. There is good reason to suspect that Greek craftsmen did not share this antipathy toward work, but the philosophical tradition was ultimately to prove more influential. A tradition of Homeric hymns to Hephaestus suggests that craft and community were in fact inseparable for many Greeks: “With bright-eyed Athena he taught men glorious crafts throughout the world—men who before had used to dwell in caves in the mountains like wild beasts.” Quoted in Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 21. As Judith N. Shklar writes in *American Citizenship*:

The sheer novelty of the notion of the dignity of labor in general, and as an essential element of citizenship, can scarcely be exaggerated. It was one of the many contributions of the Enlightenment to American public culture that flourished here far more than it ever could in Europe. In the past it had been almost universally believed that physical work defiles us, that those who labor are impure. Certainly the philosophers of antiquity regarded productive and commercial work as so deeply degrading that it made a man unfit for citizenship. Nor did these attitudes disappear with slavery. European society was for centuries separated into three orders: those who pray, those who fight, and those who labor. The last were the despised peasantry, hardly to be distinguished from the beasts. (68–69)

23 Even Benedictine monks, among the most skilled farmers, craftsmen, and engineers of the era, were looked down upon by the Church hierarchy because they labored. Ciulla, *The Working Life*, 42–43.

24 McClanahan, “Introduction.” As a result, the peculiarly unsatisfying experience of living to work rather than working to live came to be experienced as psychologically fulfilling.


26 Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America*, xiii. Even where dissatisfaction with industrial labor did find an outlet, moreover, the broader culture responded not by questioning the universality of the work ethic but by cultivating other activities in which it might be expressed more fully, from competitive sports to craft arts. See Gilbert, *Work without Salvation*.

27 McClanahan, “Introduction.”


29 Although management ideologues proudly underscore that this model could be no further from the drudgery endured by previous generations, members of the so-called creative classes embody the Weberian work ethic every bit as clearly as nineteenth-century factory workers. See Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. As Sarah Brouillette writes, the artist has become
“the premier model of ideally flexible worker.” Sanitized representations of the artist at work are taken to be “evidence that insecure employment in temporary networks is the key to groundbreaking innovation.” Brouillette, “Academic Labor, the Aesthetics of Management.” See also Jaffe, Work Won’t Love You Back.

Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, i:47–48. As Ronald Meek clarifies, classical economists like Smith distinguished themselves from the mercantilists and physiocrats who preceded them by claiming that labor constitutes the unique essence of wealth, “thus doing away with the old idea that wealth, or private property, is something as it were exterior to man, and insisting instead that it is really something of which man is the very substance.” Meek, Studies in the Labor Theory of Value, 136.

Marx, Karl Marx, 110.

Fromm, Marx’s Concept of Man, 42–43.

Jameson, Representing “Capital,” 17.

See, among others, Weeks, The Problem with Work; Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class; Berardi, The Soul at Work; Larsen et al., Marxism and the Critique of Value.

Marx, Capital, 3:954.

Weeks, The Problem with Work.

Marx, Capital, i:290–91.

Spratling, “Industrial Education for Epileptics,” 75.

Russell, Capitalism and Disability, 13.


Linda Kerber’s description of vagrancy as a status offense—“The crime is not what a person has done but what the person appears to be”—is relevant here. Black women, Kerber argues further, “have been caught in the internal contradictions of a gendered ideology of an obligation to work that succeeded slavery. The ideology was deeply rooted in antique concepts that stressed the obligation of the poor not only to be self-supporting but also to be at work that is measurable and visible, and that envisioned Black women as appropriately engaged in physical labor from which their white counterparts were more likely to be protected.” Kerber, No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies, 54, 80.

Beech, Art and Value; Brouillette, Literature and the Creative Economy; Bernes, The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization.

Burden, Chris Burden, 162–63.

Molesworth, Work Ethic, 18–19.
45 Jakobsen, “Queers Are Like Jews, Aren’t They?”; see also Grillo and Wildman, “Obscuring the Importance of Race.”

46 My thinking about the representational effort that sustains the work society and bleeds into conventional notions of the aesthetic has been informed by Leigh Claire La Berge’s work on “decommodified labor.” La Berge uses that term to describe how contemporary art is powerfully shaped by capitalist modes of production even though it may not be exchanged like other commodities. La Berge, *Wages against Artwork*.


48 “Despite the practical and theoretical importance of clarifying what work means,” the legal historian Noah Zatz writes, “the scholarly literature on work-based welfare reform largely neglects this question. Instead, the literature generally starts from the premise that work means paid employment, and it proceeds from there to debate the morality, effectiveness, and need for work-based policies.” Zatz, “What Welfare Requires from Work,” 375–76. See also Zatz, “Welfare to What.”


52 As John Guillory notes, documents or written records of transactions, exchanges, and events have of course always existed. But “the dominion of the document is a feature of modernity,” brought about in large measure by the industrial print revolution of the late nineteenth century. Guillory, “The Memo and Modernity,” 113.


54 In recent years, disability has emerged as a central concern for scholars across the disciplines. This development reflects the institutionalization of disability studies, a field that coalesced in the 1980s around the efforts of scholars and activists to conceptualize disability as a social construction and disabled people as a political minority. *Work Requirements* takes part in a second—or perhaps even a third—wave of disability studies. The intellectual project of disability studies now moves beyond the inaugural critique of normativity by attending, in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s phrase, to “what disability makes in the world.” Garland-Thomson, “Disability Studies,” 918. *Work Requirements* shares this commitment to the nimble study of disability history with books as different in method and approach as Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification*; Chen, *Animacies*; and Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*. This brief list illustrates the breadth of contemporary disability studies but also the field’s guiding interest in how disability intersects with other social identities and histories.
55 Stone, *The Disabled State*.
56 See Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*.
58 Second Thessalonians 3:10.
60 Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*, xxv. Even when the nakedly exploitive dimension of institutional labor grew difficult to ignore, reformers still argued that its primary value was noneconomic. As a social deterrent, inmate labor powerfully signified the misery of life outside the market. Such was the picture of institutional labor a New York journalist took away from a visit to a Rhode Island almshouse in 1853: “I saw a party of men carrying wood from one corner of the yard to another and piling it there, when it was all removed it was brought back again and piled in the old place.” New York evidently had yet to learn the virtue of such arrangements, the “rigid adherence” to which “relieves Providence of all lazy drones, such as invest our poor houses to a great degree.” “Letters to the Secretary of State on the Subject of Pauperism,” *Columbia Republican* (1853); quoted in Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 32.
62 Hatton, *Coerced*, 5; Beckett and Western, “Governing Social Marginality,” 44.
63 Initially, practitioners of scientific charity were not concerned with people of color. Such disregard—and often outright hostility—was well-established practice. From colonial outdoor relief to the Jacksonian almshouse, social provision was usually reserved for recognized members of the community. Just as settlement ordinances barred entry to outsiders “likely to become public charges,” Indigenous people and free people of African descent were ineligible for the resources available to white people—by custom if not by the letter of the law. These relationships were “structured by the benign solicitude of the great white father for his wards,” rather than by material generosity. Leiby, *A History of Social Welfare and Social Work*, 11. There were exceptions to this rule. The work of white missionaries in communities of color in the United States and abroad, for instance, was commonly framed as an exercise in social welfare, as was the abolitionist movement and even the Freedmen’s Bureau. Indeed, historians have suggested that the latter failed in large measure because its mission was approached as a charitable undertaking rather than a question of civil rights. Where federal officials did not recognize freed people as rights-bearing citizens, that is, their demands could be dismissed as those of undeserving beggars best served by being returned to the labor market, if necessary by force. Goldberg, *Citizens and Paupers*, 76–79. And while they faced discrimination at every step in the application process, African American veterans and their dependents were eligible for
(and often received) Civil War invalid pensions, the provision of which—as we will see in chapter 1—played a crucial role in the evolution of the modern US welfare state. Nor were segregated charitable institutions unheard of, from New York's Colored Orphan Asylum to Philadelphia's Colored House of Refuge, though the benevolent and mutual aid societies founded by African Americans probably had far greater impact. But if Black Americans were not entirely excluded from the melange of social welfare practices established across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they were much more likely to be sorted into work-based than into need-based systems of economic distribution. At the same moment, moreover, when social welfare institutions began to embrace bureaucratic protocols of scientific charity, the US workforce system was dramatically reshaped by postbellum regimes of racial discipline. The hegemony of the market and Black Americans' subservient place within it were enforced by debt peonage, vagrancy legislation, and lynch law.

64 In James Beniger's account, this latter “control revolution” was shaped most powerfully by the need to develop information-processing systems that could keep up with the ever-accelerating pace of capitalist production. Beniger, The Control Revolution, 7. Robert H. Wiebe also influentially describes this period as marked by a profound “search for order” aroused by widespread feelings of “dislocation and bewilderment.” Wiebe, The Search for Order, 12.


66 Job printing originally encompassed any work that made less than the full-sized sheet produced by large-scale presses. But today the phrase usually refers to anything not considered a book, periodical, newspaper, or specialist productions like packages. Before 1830, letterpress job work was relatively limited, hence most consumers instead opting for handwritten or engraved materials. But as demand grew for billheads, business cards, and handbills, small printers looked to advances in the jobbing platen press to keep up. Whether small, hand-operated presses or the power-driven machines used by large-volume professionals, the jobbing platen vastly accelerated the production of the small and ephemeral items used by industry, commerce, and government—while also dramatically reducing costs. Moran, Printing Presses, 143.

67 Gitelman, Paper Knowledge, 12.

68 Nancy Bentley makes a similar point with regard to “the diversity of newspaper, magazine, and book markets” and the “array of new visual, aural, and filmic technologies” created by the turn-of-the-century explosion in industrial print culture. Bentley, “Mass Media and Literary Culture,” 191.

69 Gitelman, Paper Knowledge, 10.
On the history of mendicant literature, see Schweik, *The Ugly Laws*; Fabian, *The Unvarnished Truth*. Mendicant literature is also central to this book’s second chapter.


As Marc Shell notes, the Greeks were among the first to wonder whether writing is productive or unproductive. For his part, Aristotle was unsure whether writing resembled the natural generativity of plants and animals or the unnatural generation of money. In usury, money proliferates by means of circulation and does not produce anything of actual substance. Shell, *The Economy of Literature*, 94. In the nineteenth century, these concerns took on renewed urgency amid the upheavals of industrialization and the market revolution. From Thomas Carlyle to Frederick Douglass, writers on both sides of the Atlantic watched the shifting economic landscape with apprehension but also excitement. See Gilmore, *American Romanticism and the Marketplace*. As Nicholas Bromell observes, politics and aesthetics converged in two interlocking questions: what is the nature of one’s work as a writer, and how does it relate to the work performed by others? Bromell, *By the Sweat of the Brow*, 15. Put otherwise, could and should literary labor be reconciled to the market? In deliberating on the matter, many literary writers turned to the beggar, a cultural icon usually figured as disabled and assumed to exist outside of capitalist exchange. In the wake of Romantic efforts to define art in opposition to the market, allying the writer with the beggar was a powerful means of asserting literature’s moral authority. But the stigma of idleness made doing so risky. For this reason, as Daniel Hack concludes, most nineteenth-century writers ultimately abandoned their (hypothetical) mendicant brethren, resolving instead to rebrand themselves as professional writers and productive laborers. Hack, *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel*, 71. See also Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy*.


As David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have influentially argued, such metaphorical and allegorical usages of disability function primarily as “narrative prostheses” and have little, if anything, to do with the lives of people with disabilities or with the history of disability. See Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*. See also Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*.

Kafka, “Paperwork,” 341. Rather than treating bureaucracy as ideal type, Kafka elaborates, scholars in the field of paperwork studies have set out to investigate “the pens, papers, and other raw materials of power. In their focus on technologies of writing and the materiality of communication, many of these studies show a strong affinity for book history, despite our field’s tendency to privilege texts that have been printed and bound” (341).


79 Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 30. More recently Matthew P. Brown has faulted paperwork studies for ignoring the readerly subjectivities elicited by documents. A representative case is Peter Stallybrass, who notes that job printing “transformed the texture of daily life” but did not necessarily have anything to do with reading. In suggesting that we use rather than read documents like preprinted blanks, Gitelman makes an even more direct connection to literature: “Whatever reading is entailed by genres like bills of lading and stock transfers,” she writes, it does not have “much to do with the readerly subjectivities of literature.” Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 30–31. These kinds of approaches, Brown suggests, seem to rely on a somewhat reductive notion of reading. Who is to say, after all, that literary texts cannot be read instrumentally or distractedly? The reverse is also true: we can read bills of lading and stock transfers with the same attention we bring to works of literature. Such is the wager that literary critics have begun to make, pushing for histories of reading attuned to the surprising subjectivities fostered by informational genres. The payoff, we may conclude with Brown, is an ultimately fuller sense of what reading meant in earlier eras. Brown, “Blanks.” My own sense is that the circulation of the ephemeral materials in the print culture of social welfare enacted a history of rereading that is also a history of reusing. When later writers, whether writing on behalf of institutions or as individuals, took up established forms, they used them by rereading them. They read into them, we might even say, the possibilities for thinking otherwise.

80 Caroline Levine and other literary scholars have imported the concept of affordance from the discipline of psychology to describe the usefulness of form along similar lines. See Levine, *Forms. Affordance* was first coined by James J. Gibson to explain how animals interact with their environment, such that certain elements of the environment offer or afford the animal the possibility of a certain action. A chair, for instance, “is for” or affords support. Importantly, for Gibson an affordance “is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer.” Gibson, “The Theory of Affordances,” 129. When taken up as a theory of literary interpretation, the idea of affordances returns questions of readerly experience—often eclipsed by the imperative of critique—to the center of literary studies. As C. Namwali Serpell has argued, just as Gibson’s chair “is for” support, so too do works of literature have properties that afford certain uses and options for moving through them.
And though literary affordances may vary more widely than environmental affordances, the possibilities for action are nonetheless finite, bound as they are to the particular formal qualities of the individual text at hand. Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty*, 9.


82 My sense of literariness at the heart of the print culture of social welfare—and of the formal relays connecting documents and works of literature more broadly at the turn of the century—thus parts ways with other accounts of the culture of social reform during this period. This scholarship often focuses on the rhetorical arguments leveraged for and against particular agendas or on broader efforts to delineate the philosophical meaning of benevolence and reform as such. Comprising “various persuasive texts and performances,” the archive at the center of these debates is frequently called the “literature of reform.” Ryan, “Reform,” 197. Other scholars working in this vein explore how the institution of “Literature” was itself conscripted into reformist projects, whether by activists who championed the uplifting influence of the canon or by those who promoted the educative value of self-expression and what today is called “creative writing.” Laura Fisher, for instance, has suggested that Progressive Era reformers were “guided by the belief that access to literary culture would transform the ‘culturally impoverished’ and bring about wide-ranging social change.” Fisher, *Reading for Reform*, 2. Although this scholarship has been useful in framing the story I tell here, *Work Requirements* is not fundamentally concerned with how late nineteenth-century print culture championed a particular reform movement or promoted a particular novelist. Rather, the book asks how print culture did the work of social welfare provision.


85 In Nikhil Singh’s gloss, racial capitalism refers to the “tightly woven connections between racism, war, and liberalism in the development of capitalist accumulation.” Singh, *Race and America’s Long War*, 29. Peter James Hudson writes in a similar vein that racial capitalism refers to “the simultaneous emergence of racism and capitalism in the modern world and their mutual dependence.” Hudson, *Bankers and Empire*, 13.

86 Lowe, “History Hesitant,” 86. Today, this agenda is implicit in the very word *welfare*. What once described a panoply of supportive programs, from mothers’ pensions to the GI Bill, is now a racialized pejorative, the vicious caricatures it conjures serving to obscure and justify a host of disciplinary policies. A century ago, social welfare practices furthered the ends of racial
capitalism by means of outright exclusion or segregation but also by supporting the convict lease, vagrancy ordinance, Black industrial education, and imperial expansion.


88 Erevelles and Minear, “Unspeakable Offenses,” 357.


90 As scholars such as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Jasbir Puar, David Mitchell, and Sarah F. Rose have shown, the history of disability is thus marked by enduring forms of both economic disenfranchisement and compulsory productivity. Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*; Puar, *The Right to Maim*; Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*.

91 In accounting for this formal give-and-take, *Work Requirements* parts ways with literary scholarship that focuses on narrative, figural, and allegorical linkages of race and disability. The chapters to follow are thus indebted to important studies on the cultural codes of sensation, abjection, overcoming, and fantasy by which race and disability are linked in literary and cultural production. See in particular Pickens, *Black Madness*; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*; Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*; Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.* The particularity of my archive, however, calls for a recalibration of method. The book does not chart the overlapping representational economies of race and disability in memoir, speculative fiction, or literary realism. Instead, *Work Requirements* attends to the ephemeral modes of intersectionality created by the institutional genres and documentary protocols that emerged in the late nineteenth century to police the economic category of disability.

1. The Pensioner’s Claim

1 Neither military invalid pensions nor the fundamentals of bureaucratic record keeping were new with the Civil War. Veterans of every US war since the Revolutionary War had received compensation for injuries received in the line of duty (or as specified by the particular regulations then in effect). What was new with the Civil War invalid pension system was the amount of public scrutiny to which the claims review process was subjected and hence the prominence (and then notoriety) to which the genre of the pension claim rose (or fell). Indeed, it may make sense to think of the Civil War invalid pension claim as a genre today only because the public then did so. On the history of US pension policy and Civil War pension policy in particular,


4 Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 128.

5 Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 151, emphasis added.


8 To be sure, in the waning decades of the nineteenth century, US culture was still coming to terms with the war’s carnage and with the physical violence visited upon the bodies of thousands of injured veterans. See, for instance, Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*. Whenever Americans engaged with the bureaucracy of federal pension policy, however, as an ever-increasing number of veterans and their dependents did, they learned to approach disability strategically not as a measure of bodily injury or incapacitation but as a set of narrative conventions governing a body’s eligibility for social support.

9 Couser, *Signifying Bodies*, 2. Couser’s term for this particular subset of the “some body narrative” is “autosomatography.” It is paired with “somatography,” a category that includes life writing “about living with, loving, or knowing intimately someone with such a body.”


11 Berlant, “The Epistemology of State Emotion.”

12 Twain, *Mark Twain’s Civil War*, 96, emphasis in original. Skocpol’s careful scholarship backs up Twain’s intuition and clearly documents the role that patronage politics played in the expansion of the pension system. See Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.


14 Trumbull, “Pensions for All,” 729.

15 Christopher Hager writes eloquently about the use of physical language to describe writing, a practice which he takes to illuminate the paucity of our understanding of writing as such (and not just writing situated in the bureaucratic context examined here). “Science surely has more to reveal about the mysteries of written literacy’s cognitive workings,” Hager notes, “but it may never yield a complete understanding. Our frequent reliance on physical language to describe writing—grabbing our pencils, sitting down to write, filling up or cranking out pages—compensates for our incomprehension of the inward process.” Hager, *Word by Word*, 17–18.
The Pension Bureau continued to use this system of folding and bundling pension claims well past the advent of the letter and drawer file cabinets that allowed materials to lie flat. As the Taft Commission on Economy and Efficiency reported in 1912, there was historically little interest in upgrading the Pension Bureau’s filing system because of the “large expense which would necessarily be incurred and the absence of any accruing future benefits or economies.” With increasingly elderly claimants dying, in other words, and public opinion squarely against pensioning disabled veterans of future wars, it seemed easiest to leave things as they were. United States President’s Commission on Economy and Efficiency, *Economy and Efficiency in the Government Service*, 551. Late in 1913, however, the Pension Bureau did gradually begin to convert from folded to flat filing. Glenn, “The Taft Commission and the Government’s Record Practices,” 297.


William W. Eastman to Ziba Roberts, December 30, 1890, box 45, Ziba Roberts Collection, 1861, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.


“Having been acquainted with said soldier for about 21 years, and that on the 15th day of April 1890 I carefully examined said claimant and found him suffering from general debility and nervous prostration [and] abnormal condition of the heart…. In my opinion, said claimant is totally disabled for the performance of manual labor.” Nathan Smyth, “Nathan Smyth Ledger, James S. Schoff Civil War Collection, 1890–1893,” box 1, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.


The ambiguous status of narrative that shaped public perception of the pension system turned on many of the same anxieties about fraud that beset popular culture in the era of P. T. Barnum and a host of well-publicized literary hoaxes. As Lara Langer Cohen has written, across the nineteenth century, fraudulence became at once “indissociable from American literature and even definitive of it.” Among antebellum readers, literature was at once similar to other modes of cultural speculation—from inflated currencies to land bubbles and quack medicine—and an absolutely unique tradition of subterfuge, imposture, and plagiarism. If the invalid pension claim was shaped in part by the bureaucratic vicissitudes of postbellum institutional life, the ill repute into which the genre fell also reflected these older anxieties about the literary as such. Cohen, *The Fabrication of American Literature*, 1.
24 Smalley, “The United States Pension Office,” 430. There is no way of knowing how many pensions were granted to duplicitous applicants, as Theda Skocpol writes: “After poring over Annual Reports of the Commissioners of Pensions to find any possible systematic statistics, I have reluctantly concluded that nothing exact can be said about the proportions of illegitimate pensioners or expenditures.” But it does seem plain that cultural anxieties about pension fraud were at root anxieties about narrative in general and the genre’s ability to ensure that pensioned veterans had earned what they were given. Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers, 145.

25 Warner, “Half a Million Dollars a Day for Pensions,” 447. Nor did critics of the bureau differentiate between the lay evidence given by fellow soldiers and the medical evidence provided by physicians. Both could be easily fabricated. As one observer complained, “Any system that permitted claims to be established upon affidavits prepared in secret by the claimants and their friends and upon the certificate of the neighborhood physician, is an injustice to honest pensioners and the government.” Oliver, “History of the Civil War Military Pensions,” 43. For their part, claimants also feared that the bureau had “play[ed] into the hands of the pension-shark” by placing a premium on narrative evidence. “You insist on affidavits,” one veteran wrote. “Affidavits? They are his [the lawyer’s] stock in trade. He can furnish affidavits by the dozens, swearing anything to anybody. But without his aid the honest soldier is at a loss.” Bardeen, Little Fifer’s War Diary, 318–19.

26 As Cheryl Harris has famously argued, the legal construction of whiteness hinges on the question of reputation. “The reputation of being white,” Harris notes, “was treated as a species of property, or something in which a property interest could be asserted.” As I explore in what follows, the cultural notoriety of the pension claim—and the threat its alleged fraudulence posed to the reputation of respectable veterans—was indeed bound up with the social value of whiteness and the reputational injury posed by blackness. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” 1734.

27 George, William Newby.

28 Quoted in Glasson, Federal Military Pensions in the United States, 175–76.

29 See United States Pension Bureau, General Instructions to Special Examiners.

30 Britton, A Traveling Court, 57–58.

31 See Reid, “Government Policy, Prejudice, and the Experience”; Logue and Blanck, “‘Benefit of the Doubt.’”

32 Shaffer, After the Glory, 206–7.

33 Quoted in Shaffer, After the Glory, 130.

34 United States Pension Bureau, General Instructions to Special Examiners, 28. Because marriages among enslaved people were rarely documented, moreover, agents were advised to consult local opinion about whether a
given relationship should be recognized as a marriage: “A marriage may be
presumed upon the testimony of two or more credible witnesses who know
that the parties lived together as husband and wife for a number of years,
acknowledged each other as such, and were so received by reputable persons
in the community in which they resided.” United States Pension Bureau, A
Treatise on the Practice of the Pension Bureau, 55.

United States Pension Bureau, General Instructions to Special Examiners, 28.

See Silber, The Romance of Reunion.

Fleming, Around the Capital with Uncle Hank, 202.


If a story Paul Laurence Dunbar published in Collier’s Weekly in 1902 is any
indication, Black writers also looked to plantation nostalgia to defuse white
anxieties about African American mutual aid societies. “The Promoter” de-
scribes how Jane Callender is awarded a pension shortly after her husband’s
death. Jane dies herself, however, before the first check arrives—though not
before she can sign her pension over to Dicey Fairfax to prevent the money
from “go[ing] back to the white folks.” Dicey thus decides to adopt “Jane
Callender” as a “bus’ness name,” for the purposes of drawing the pension,
while remaining “Dicey Fairfax at home.” It is not long, of course, before
the special examiners catch wind and Dicey is charged with fraud. The
proceedings begin poorly for the defendant, who plainly answers “Dicey
Fairfax” rather than “Jane Callender” when asked to state her name for the
record. Pressed further, Dicey simply explains why she uses the pseudonym.
Ultimately, however, she objects to identifying herself one way or the other.
The prosecutor, it turns out, is the son of Dicey’s old mistress; before the
end of slavery, she would have been known to him as simply “Aunt Dicey.”
With the intimacy between white child and Black mammy reestablished,
the charges against Dicey are dismissed on the condition that she return
the ill-gotten money. “No longer a wealthy woman and a capitalist,” Dicey
resumes her duties in the kitchen, where she bakes “golden-brown biscuits
for a certain young attorney and his wife.” Dunbar’s winking admiration
for her manipulation of the pension system notwithstanding, Dicey is thus
ultimately reinserted into the paternalist order of the old South and made
an object of ridicule. “These were the days of benefit societies that only
benefited the shrewdest man,” Dunbar writes, “of mutual insurance associa-
tions, of wild building companies, and of gilt-edged land schemes wherein
the unwary become bogged.” The implication, of course, is that the mutual
aid societies are also a scam, particularly as they create an incentive for

Quoted in Zimmerman, Alabama in Africa, 48.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I

42 Spivey, Schooling for the New Slavery.
43 Bentley, Frantic Panoramas, 25.
44 Andrews, “The Representation of Slavery.”
45 Washington, Up from Slavery, 155.
51 See Mirzoeff, “The Shadow and the Substance.”
52 Stone, The Disabled State, 23. See also Samuels, “From Melville to Eddie Murphy”; Schweik, The Ugly Laws.
54 Washington, “Chapters from My Experience (II),” 13635.
55 Washington, “Chapters from My Experience (II),” 13636.
56 Washington, “Chapters from My Experience (II),” 13638.
57 On the Black woman’s club movement, see Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent. On the conservativism and elitism of the uplift project more generally, see Gaines, Uplifting the Race.
58 A decade before “Chapters from My Experience” appeared in the World’s Work, in fact, Washington himself became something of a special examiner—tracking down and discrediting an unlikely political rival by outing him as the recipient of a Civil War invalid pension. On Washington’s rivalry with veteran William Hannibal Thomas, the Black author of a popular anti-Black screed titled The American Negro (1901), see Carmody, “In Spite of Handicaps.” Tuskegee became far more amenable to disabled veterans after Washington’s passing in 1915 and with the advent of federal rehabilitation programs during World War I. With the creation of a segregated veterans’ hospital at Tuskegee in 1921, moreover, misgivings about the shirking veteran gave way to anxieties about the rise of Black medical professionals. When the Black doctors and nurses hired by the Veterans Bureau arrived for their first day of work, they were met by Klansmen draped in bedsheets taken from the hospital storeroom. Daniel, “Black Power in the 1920s.”
60 Kelley, “A Day of Reckoning,” 205.
61 Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 15. For two other ways of understanding reparations outside of strictly legal and strictly economic paradigms, see also Tillet, *Sites of Slavery*, Laski, *Untimely Democracy*.

62 Vaughan, *Vaughan’s “Freedmen’s Pension Bill,”* 125.

63 Vaughan, *Vaughan’s “Freedmen’s Pension Bill,”* 29.

64 Vaughan, *Vaughan’s “Freedmen’s Pension Bill,”* 32, 29.


66 Quoted in Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True*, 44.


68 A similarly elastic argument is made in an 1898 “Petition to Congress” that lists five ostensibly unrelated resolutions in favor of pensioning ex-slaves. Not only had “generation after generation of Colored people served this country as slaves,” but pension policy also neglected the “unknown and deceased Colored soldiers” whose dependents were now “destitute and starving.” The pension system itself, moreover, was unthinkable without slave labor: “It is a precedent established by the patriots of this country to relieve its distressed citizens … and millions of our deceased people, besides those who still survive, worked as slaves for the development of the great resources and wealth of this country.” Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

69 Fleming, “Ex-Slave Pension Frauds,” 129.

70 J. B. Stinson, “‘Jes’ Hurry Up de Penshun’: The Old Time Darkey’s Appeal for a Pension,” 1903, box 147, item 149, Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University. Stinson’s doggerel presents a minstrel plea for Senator Mark Hanna to forget about “dat ol’ steamship bill” and push the ex-slave pension legislation through Congress. Hanna did indeed introduce Vaughan’s bill to the Senate in February 1903, but he was hardly a champion of the ex-slave cause. Hanna made it clear to his colleagues, in fact, that he had proposed the pension legislation as a favor to Vaughan; he even included the words “by request” on the title page of the bill itself. Hanna’s lukewarm endorsement did little to strengthen the proposal’s chances, and Vaughan’s bill once again failed to reach the floor. But as the *New York Times* noted, the senator’s name and prominence could not help but galvanize interest in the ex-slave pension bill, whatever his own thoughts on the matter: “Heretofore the bills have been introduced by members of Congress not so well known as Senator Hanna. The placing of his name upon the bill will undoubtedly have a greater effect than ever upon the ignorant negroes who are supporting the scheme with their little earnings.” *New York Times*, “Hanna Aids Ex-Slaves,” 3.

71 Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True*, 131. As the *Colored American* of Washington, DC, wrote in 1900: “Despite the widespread warnings of the press, both
white and colored, there are still some people foolish enough to pay over their hard cash to sundry confidence sharks who run up and down the country pretending that Congress is about to grant pensions to ex-slaves. No such thing will be done in this or any other generation and who ever asserts the contrary is a knave, a humbug or worse.” *Colored American*, “No Pensions for Ex-Slaves”; quoted in Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True*, 131.

72 Dickerson’s conviction was eventually overturned, but House served time in the Jefferson City, Missouri, penitentiary from November 1917 to August 1918. Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True*, 107.

73 As the author of one such letter phrased it: “This Bureau would appreciate any information which you may be able to furnish as to the name and whereabouts of any person who has thus impersonated an officer of the Government in connection with this matter.” Letter from the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions, November 20, 1897, to Rev. Thomas Parker, in Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

74 Kazanjian, *The Brink of Freedom*, 50, emphasis in original.

75 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

76 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

77 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

78 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

79 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

80 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

81 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

82 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”

83 Bureau of Pensions, “Washington D.C., Ex-Slave Pension Correspondence.”


89 See Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights*.

90 Temporary Aid to Needy Families, a block grant that created work-related benchmarks for states and individuals, was part of Clinton-era welfare reform. It replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a cash assistance program that began with the Social Security Act of 1935. Falk, “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.”

2. The Beggar’s Case

1 As in this book’s introduction, I use the words beggar and begging with full recognition of the stigma they have long carried but also with a desire to acknowledge the centrality of begging to disability history and culture. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson notes, however, “The history of begging is virtually synonymous with the history of disability.” For this reason, I omit quotation marks in the rest of the chapter to leave space for the vagaries of self-identification, contestation, and critique that coalesce around the term. Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 35.


3 Across these genres, Schweik notes, mendicant writing tended to the non-fictional and autobiographical. This was “a literature of contestation. In it, marginalized disabled historians wrote about marginalized disability history.” Schweik, *The Ugly Laws*, 260.


5 At the turn of the century, social science referred not to a set of academic disciplines but to the conviction among social reformers that the methods of natural science should be applied to social problems. If society was an organism, the Spencerian logic went, the rules governing its efficient operation could be established and, with this knowledge, dysfunction easily eliminated. Bernard and Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology*; Turner and Turner, *The Impossible Science*.

6 Becker and Clark, *Little Tools of Knowledge*.


8 Hurwitz, “Form and Representation in Clinical Case Reports,” 218.

9 See Ragin, “Introduction.”


11 Jolles, *Einfache Formen*.

12 For historian of science John Forrester, the tension between the particular and the universal in the case can be traced back to Aristotle’s efforts to distinguish knowledge from practice. Aristotle argued that we can only know the universal and the necessary, not the contingent or the particular. We certainly deal with the latter in our everyday lives, but these encounters yield practical wisdom rather than real knowledge. It is like playing in the dark: we can feel our way around but never know exactly where we are. Aristotle’s distinction between universal knowledge and practical wisdom remained influential for later philosophers, but it also sparked a tradition of dissent.
John Stuart Mill, for instance, turns the tables on Aristotle by arguing that knowledge proceeds only from the inductive study of particulars. Not only is the distinction between practical wisdom and universal knowledge moot, in other words, but the latter does not exist in the first place. Forrester, *Thinking in Cases*, 4–6. For his part, Michel Foucault answers what he takes to be Aristotle’s question—“Is a science of the individual possible?”—by pointing to the historical record: the individual became an object of knowledge in the eighteenth century, when the clinical sciences created the genre of the case. This “network of writing” was tasked with documenting the “individual as he may described, judged, measured, and compared with others, in his individuality” but also “the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, moralized, excluded.” Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 191–92, 194. The Aristotelian cleft between the universal and the particular, Foucault thus concludes, collapses in the modern era. But as individuals entered the field of knowledge, they also became subjects of discipline. Foucault’s genealogy of the case in *Discipline and Punish* has been taken up by scholars in fields as disparate as the history of medicine, sociology, and law. But this expansive body of writing has tended to overlook how the case for Foucault is shaped not only by the history of clinical science but also by the vagaries of literary history and the genre of biography. “For a long time,” Foucault observes by way of glossing the case, “ordinary individuality—the everyday individuality of everybody—remained below the threshold of description.” Only a privileged few were “looked at, described in detail, followed from day to day by an uninterrupted writing.” These texts feted kinship groups, recorded heroic triumphs, or cast the exemplary life as “a monument for future memory.” Such honorific modes, however, gradually lost their monopoly on the genre of biography. With the rise of the case, “chronicle[s] of kings or the adventures of the great bandits” were replaced by “the carefully collated lives of mental patients or delinquents.” Biography was no longer “a procedure of heroization” but one “of objectification and subjection.” It aimed not to preserve “the individuality of the memorable man” but to reproduce the individuality of “the calculable man.” Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 191–92, 194. This distinction between heroization and subjection might seem absolute, so forcefully does Foucault underscore the novelty of the case. But in the generic evolution he traces, continuity matters as much as rupture. Not a clean break with what came before, that is, the case exists on a continuum with the chronicle, the legend, and the saint’s life. Tracking how the individual enters the field of knowledge thus means grappling with how the memorable shades into the calculable and vice versa—and to what ends.

Foucault’s idiosyncratic genealogy suggests a more nuanced understanding of why the case became so crucial to turn-of-the-century scientific charity. To be sure, reformers valued the genre as an objective means
of assessing and passing judgment on an applicant’s work ethic. But they also believed that casework yielded a more accurate portrait of individual circumstances and needs than the charged in-person exchanges promoted by begging. Armed with social casework, in other words, charity agents, social workers, and philanthropists hoped to commit the individual life to paper without clouding their judgment with sentiment or relying on catchall solutions. This perspective is not without appeal today. In a foundational study of gender and the US welfare state, for instance, the historian Linda Gordon also champions social casework as an exacting genre of life writing. For Gordon, casework is “specific rather than universal, grounded rather than abstract, tailored rather than generalized.” Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled*, 178. In contrasting the “individualizing” methods of charity reformers with the actuarial methods favored by backers of social insurance, Gordon may overstate matters. Her admiration for turn-of-the-century casework risks obscuring the ambivalence these historical practices share with theoretical explications of the case. The writing produced under the sign of scientific charity, after all, was put to decidedly deindividualizing ends, labeling applicants as deserving or undeserving. As such, casework was both individualizing and deindividualizing—a paradoxically irresolute genre of life writing that bears out the contradictions inherent in the broader print culture of social welfare.

As economic historians tell us, what we often take to be a self-evident distinction between private giving and public provision is, historically speaking, anything but. See Levy, “Altruism and the Origins of Nonprofit Philanthropy.”

Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 527.

On effective altruism, see Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do*.


Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*.

The first American cos was founded in Buffalo in 1877 by the Reverend S. Humphreys Gurteen, an episcopal clergyman who had been active in the London Charity Organization Society. Seeking to address the impoverishment and mendicancy he encountered in his new ministerial post, Gurteen suggested that Buffalo follow London’s example. To that end, he gave a series of sermons called “Phases of Charity” and systematized the work of his parish guild so that each application for assistance was promptly and thoroughly investigated. Woodrooffe, *From Charity to Social Work*, 90. Gurteen founded the Buffalo Charity Organization Society soon thereafter, an institution whose goals and methods he described in *A Handbook of Char-
ity Organization. Begun in part as a response to the countless inquiries he received “asking for information with regard to the new plan of dealing with Pauperism and Poverty,” Gurteen’s book became a practical guide for dozens of cases springing up across the country. Gurteen, *A Handbook of Charity Organization*, iii. The most prominent among these was the New York Charity Organization Society, founded in 1882 by Josephine Shaw Lowell, who was to become a guiding figure in the movement in her own right. Indeed, if Gurteen wrote the first primer in the methods of charity organization in the United States, Lowell’s *Public Relief and Private Charity* (1884) was the first American statement on the philosophy of scientific charity. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 68. In this influential study, Lowell sought above all to parse the “fundamental difference in mental attitude” separating indiscriminate almsgiving from organized charity. Whereas proponents of conventional “dolegiving” considered it “a natural condition of things that a certain part of the community should not be self-supporting,” modern reformers such as Lowell “regard[ed] each case of poverty as a wrong, an unnatural evil and one which they should use every effort to eradicate.” Such eradication would not happen by means of relief alone. In many cases, relief actually “prevent[ed] the energetic action required on the part of the sufferers themselves to lift themselves out of their difficulties.” It was only by carefully investigating all applicants and coordinating measured and appropriate responses to their needs that charity workers could hope to foster habits of self-reliance and self-help. Lowell, *Public Relief and Private Charity*, 95.


20 As reformer Josephine Lowell noted, “The task of dealing with the poor and the degraded has become a science, and it has well defined principles, recognized and conformed to, more or less closely, by all who really give time and thought to the subject.” Lowell, *Public Relief and Private Charity*, n.p.


23 Lubove, *The Professional Altruist*, 20. Robert H. Bremner comes to much the same conclusion: “During most of the nineteenth century the prevailing theory was that if an individual failed to obtain competence, the fault lay in some weakness or defect in his own character. The experience of the last quarter of the century, however, produced ample evidence to bring this thesis into disrepute. By 1900 there was widespread conviction that the causes of failure were to be found, in most cases, in circumstances outside and beyond the control of individual personality.” Bremner, *From the Depths*, 131.

24 Abel, “Valuing Care,” 34.

26 Lowell, “Charity Organization,” 83. Though the overlap in terminology may have been coincidental, organized charity’s fantasy of comprehensive record keeping shares a great deal with the work of Pension Bureau special examiners explored in chapter 1. A more direct source of inspiration came from the new genres of internal communication that emerged with the managerial revolution in US business. As JoAnne Yates has shown, commercial interactions that had previously taken place in person were increasingly facilitated by circulars, reports, and manuals—documents designed to improve the efficiency of a given firm. Were that firm in “the business of charity,” as cos reformers described their work, these documents would be used to streamline the vetting process. Yates, Control through Communication.

27 Richmond, Social Diagnosis, 50.

28 If nine cases of need were brought before the board, Richmond observed, nine different strategies would emerge. Social caseworkers might decide, for instance, to “make a loan to one, send another to the woodyard to work for all he gets, stave off the landlord’s eviction notice for a third, find a chance of work outside for a fourth, place the fifth in a hospital, send the sixth and his whole family to the country, provide cash for the exceptionally provident buyer who is the seventh, relieve the improvident eighth sparingly with supplies plus a work-test and, instead of doing work twice over, turn the ninth over to the charity that is already caring for him.” Richmond, What Is Social Case Work?, 209–10.

29 See Abel, “Valuing Care.”

30 Quoted in Byington, What Social Workers Should Know, 35.

31 Quoted in Byington, What Social Workers Should Know, 35.

32 Byington, What Social Workers Should Know, 35–36.

33 Success stories like that of the amputee shoemaker suggest something of a consensus among charity workers that physically disabled applicants could easily reenter the labor force. Such optimism, however, was tempered by the equally widespread belief that many disabled people would not benefit from scientific charity and would be better served by institutionalization or even sterilization. Social workers generally reserved this sort of pessimistic biological determinism for the “feeble-minded,” in what might be read as a concession to social Darwinist critics. Lubove, The Professional Altruist, 68–69. These latter charged the cos movement with “promoting the survival of the unfit.” Amos Warner mounted an influential defense in American Charities: A Study in Philanthropy and Economics (1894) by questioning not the validity of social Darwinism as such but rather the consequences of following its dictates too closely in the present. Warner argued that the instinct for solidarity and sympathy was itself necessary for human survival and progress. Only by allowing this instinct to follow its course would society eventually develop more ef-
icient means of relieving and finally of preventing poverty and dependence. The alternative, to implement social Darwinist policies in response to the problems of the moment, was thus shortsighted at best and detrimental to the course of human evolution at worst. “Some talk as though extermination would be a remedy for pauperism,” Warner noted. “Possibly, but it would be a costly remedy biologically; and if we allow our instincts to compel us to forego the use of it, we shall eventually find something better.” Like many of his peers, Warner thus did not think that organized charity was incompatible with eugenics in the long run, or even in all cases in the present. Indeed, Warner conceded that “incapables” who could not be rehabilitated by scientific charity were best dealt with by means of eugenic marriage laws, sexual sequestration, and “the permanent isolation of the essentially unfit.” Such measures were in humanity’s best interest, both in the present and in the future. “Certain it is,” Warner concluded, “that while charity may not cease to shield the children of misfortune, it must, to an ever increasing extent, reckon with the laws of heredity, and do what it can to check the spreading curse of race deterioration.” Warner, *American Charities*, 119, 128, 135.

34 Huyssen, *Progressive Inequality*, 76.
35 Abel, “Valuing Care,” 34–35, 43–44.
36 Abel, “Valuing Care,” 43–44.
38 Zunz, *Philanthropy in America*, 1. As an adviser to John D. Rockefeller recalled, “I gradually developed and introduced into all his charities the principles of scientific giving, and he found himself in no long time laying aside retail giving almost wholly, and entering safely and pleasurably into the field of wholesale giving.” Quoted in Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation*, 7. “About the year 1890,” Rockefeller himself wrote, “I was still following the haphazard fashion of giving here and there as appeals presented themselves. I investigated as I could, and worked myself almost to a nervous breakdown in groping my way, without sufficient guide or chart, through this ever-widening philanthropic endeavor.” Rockefeller, *Random Reminiscences of Men and Events*, 156.
39 As Atticus G. Haygood, a Methodist bishop and the author of works nonfiction like *Our Brother in Black* (1881), recalled of an early meeting of the fund’s board: “A few ideas seem to be agreed upon. Help none but those who help themselves. Educate only at schools which provide in some form for industrial education.” Quoted in Finkenbine, “Law, Reconstruction, and African American Education,” 170, 169.
40 Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 4.
41 The geb was founded in 1902 at the suggestion of Rockefeller’s son, John D. Rockefeller Jr. After visiting several prominent Black industrial schools,
latter initiated a series of conferences in New York where plans were laid “for an organization that would deal in a comprehensive way with the backward and baffling problem of education.” The younger Rockefeller consulted with his father and then conceived of a “Negro Education Board, whose activities would be confined to that race.” Fosdick, The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation, 9. Discovering that such an organization would not be tolerated by white Southerners, the Rockefellers and their allies agreed on a more conciliatory mission statement. The geb was thus founded with the goal of fostering “the promotion of education within the United States without distinction of race, sex or creed.” Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, 7–8, emphasis in original. In practice, this meant developing initiatives to foster interest in public education among both white and Black Southerners, from farming demonstrations to hookworm education programs. Endowed with $33 million in Rockefeller gifts in the first decade of its operation, the geb acquired a virtual monopoly over educational philanthropy in the South and for Black schools across the country. Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, 4; Harlan, Separate and Unequal, 87.


43 Zunz, Philanthropy in America, 18.

44 For many institutions, these shortcomings were due to lack of resources or mismanagement, or simply to bad luck. Other schools, however, were alleged to be industrial schools in name only. Recognizing that the geb only funded industrial education, institutions with academic curricula often strained to present themselves in the best light or even lied outright about their qualifications. As a trusted geb adviser, Washington and his staff routinely carried out investigations of “fake industrial schools” intended to prevent the misappropriation of geb funds. Washington’s collaboration, of course, was not altogether selfless. He clearly had a great deal to gain by ensuring that the boundaries of what counted as industrial education were properly policed and that anyone who did not play by his rules encountered financial precarity if not also bankruptcy. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 117–18.

45 Many schools continued to solicit donations in person, whether on the “northern trips” that principals and hired agents made to consult with civic groups, churches, and individual donors or by following the example of the Fisk Jubilee Singers and sending student groups on tour.

46 Wexler, Tender Violence; Field, Uplift Cinema.

47 Harlan, Booker T. Washington, 134.

48 Dixon, The Sins of the Father, 137; quoted in Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, 57.

49 In Up from Slavery, Washington addressed the increasingly common criticism of his fundraising practices—that he did little more than beg from
overly sentimental Northerners—with coy evasiveness masquerading as forthrightness. Where ally Walter Hines Page defended Washington’s promotional endeavors as effecting a “transfiguration of the begging method,” Washington himself preferred to speak of “the science of what is called begging.” With this strange phrase, Washington would seem to embrace two more or less strictly opposed stances on the dreaded figure of the beggar. On the one hand, with the “science of what is called begging” Washington conjures the taxonomies of mendicant performance that were a mainstay of the popular press and among readers at once scandalized and titillated. His own strategies of rhetoric, gesture, and comportment, it would seem, whether at the podium or on a cold call, thus had a great deal in common with the efforts of street operators to convince passersby to reach for their wallets. In this regard, Washington’s counsel to an imagined interlocutor who asks for fundraising advice is particularly revealing. Among other things, Washington tells the latter to “keep under the body.” Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 88. As Daniel Leverenz notes, this phrase cites 1 Corinthians. See Leverenz, *Pater­nalism Incorporated*, 166. But this phrase also recalls that most notorious ploy of the “sham cripple,” hiding one leg so as to be mistaken for an amputee. If Washington’s “science of what is called begging” playfully embraces mendicant practice, however, the phrase also clearly recalls the doctrine of scientific charity and the efforts of Washington’s friends and colleagues in the world of organized charity to eliminate begging. From this vantage, Washington would seem to be affirming membership in this reformist club. Like the charity workers who sought to abolish indiscriminate giving, Washington believed in the scientific investigation of all claims and above all in finding solutions that promote the ethic of self-help.

That these two ways of understanding “the science of what is called begging” would be so directly at odds speaks to Washington’s ambivalence about the seemingly ceaseless fundraising work he was called on to do. Ultimately, however, his musings on the subject in *Up from Slavery* gravitate toward scenarios that allow Washington to distinguish his efforts from the practices of mendicancy by recasting fundraising as a form of employment. Early in his discussion of “the science of what is called begging,” for instance, Washington reverses the affective polarity of the charitable exchange by asking readers to sympathize not with needy petitioners but with the wealthy donors they petition. “Very few persons have any idea of the large number of applications for help that rich people are constantly being flooded with,” he writes, perhaps with Rockefeller or Carnegie in mind. Some received as many as twenty calls per day, “to say nothing of the applications received in the mails.” The implication is that these wealthy men and women had no choice but to entertain their callers and attend to the piles of letters they received daily. Such responsibility transforms what might seem a chance act of benevolence into a regular mode of employment. The private salon
becomes a place of business. And as a partner in the transactions conducted there, Washington was by extension also on the job. *Up from Slavery* drives this point home with an anecdote that finds Washington calling on a man in Boston who, with very little prodding, writes a check for a “generous sum.” Before Washington can rise to thank his patron, he is beaten to the punch. “I am so grateful to you Mr. Washington,” the donor says, “for the opportunity to help a good cause…. We in Boston are constantly indebted to you for doing our work.” Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 89. With this narrative sleight of hand, Washington is once again an employee rather than a beggar. Less clear is what kind of labor Washington performs and for whom.

The paternalist echoes in the phrase “our work” would suggest that wealthy Bostonians have subcontracted to Washington the arduous labor of meeting the “white man’s burden.” But Washington also acts as a social caseworker employed by a cos, his investigatory work meant to allow potential donors to make informed decisions about how best to disburse their gifts. Leverenz pushes this reading further, suggesting that Washington’s labor in this scene is more specifically that of a white-collar middle manager.

Edwards, “Uplifting the Submerged Masses,” 225. A handwritten document titled “Obituary of W.J. Edwards,” unsigned and undated in the William J. Edwards papers at the Amistad Research Center, provides what may be the fullest and presumably most objective account of Edwards’s illness.

Notwithstanding the devotion and tender care of this aunt, he fell victim of a disease that nearly robbed him of his eyesight and crippled him in one of his feet and one of his arms. For months at a time he was too cripple [*sic*] to get out of doors to run and play as other normal children. Under these conditions attending school was impossible. After years of suffering he was observed one day on the roadside by a kind and sympathetic physician, who urged his Aunt to bring the boy to his office for an examination…. After weeks of treatment and general operations on his crippled foot, Edwards was allowed to come home. His health greatly improved and his sight partially restored, he attempted to study and learn something from his more fortunate playmates who attended school…. [After much work] he found he was far in advance of the boys and girls who regularly attended school and had no handicap. One of the local ministers recognized something unusual in this crippled boy, so he told him about the Tuskegee Institute and the wonderful opportunities it was offering to Negro youths. This fired Edwards’ imagination and he was determined to go to Tuskegee. His health had now improved to the point where he could do some work such as chopping and picking cotton, pulling corn and other farm work. There was plenty of this type of work to be done and altho the pay was small Edwards never turned down any call that came his way…. Finally he saved enough to buy himself a few clothes and enough cash to pay for his railroad fare to Tuskegee. So
on January 1, 1888, he took his leave for Tuskegee. He arrived at Tuskegee with only 50 cents in money. He was admitted as a work student. He was still greatly handicapped by his early affliction for he had not fully recovered nor did he ever fully recover. But he did not allow these handicaps to stand in his way or block his path to a higher and better life. (“Obituary of W.J. Edwards,” n.d., folder 4, William J. Edwards Papers, ca. 1893–1985, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA, 1–3)

Indeed, Edwards was not the first to raise money with his story. That honor fell to Washington, who began speaking about his former student on fund-raising trips to the North not long after Edwards graduated from Tuskegee in 1893. Edwards occasionally joined his mentor on stage, though the records of these events are scarce. The earliest published account of Edwards’s life is an article that Washington placed in Century magazine in 1900 and had reprinted in regional newspapers across the country. In “Signs of Progress among the Negroes,” Edwards’s rehabilitation becomes exemplary of the transformative power of Black industrial education but also serves as a model for “what may be done in Cuba and Porto Rico.” Washington’s imperial fable opens on the rural South with an encounter between a former slave owner and an unsightly beggar: “Some years after the war, a young Black boy, who seemed to have ‘rained down,’ was discovered on the plantation of Mr. S——, the owner. In daily rides through the plantation Mr. S—— saw this boy sitting by the roadside, and his condition awakened his pity, for, from want of care, he was covered from head to foot with sores, and Mr. S—— soon grew into the habit of tossing him a nickel or a dime as he rode by.” Shortly thereafter, Edwards, the young beneficiary of Mr. S——’s almsgiving, learns of Tuskegee and resolves to make the long journey on foot. When he runs into financial difficulty at school, Edwards turns once again to Mr. S——, this time for a loan. The latter obliges with fifteen dollars but holds out no hope of being repaid. When Edwards returns after graduation, however, he does make good on his debt, and with interest. Thus reunited and seeing eye to eye on the virtue of labor, Edwards and Mr. S—— go on to found Snow Hill Institute together, now partners in the revitalization of the South.

It should not surprise us that Washington takes liberties with Edwards’s biography. It is difficult to miss, for instance, how closely R. O. Simpson, a white veteran of the Confederate army who is less crucial in Edwards’s version of events, resembles Washington’s own mentor, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong of Hampton Institute. Perhaps more surprising is the static quality of Washington’s before-and-after portrait. Where we might expect Edwards to have been completely changed by his rehabilitative experience at Tuskegee, here the unsightly beggar of Edwards’s youth shares a great deal with the industrious graduate. Both are dependent on white generosity, whether alms or loans. To be sure, the parallel between Edwards before
and after would have served to placate white Southerners concerned that education of any kind would disrupt the delicate racial hierarchy of the New South. Such, it would seem, were the only terms on which Washington was willing to embrace the resemblance between street mendicancy and institutional fundraising. For his part, though, Edwards would take this comparison as the basis for underscoring the productive nature of his own literary labor rather than celebrating the generosity of the donors to whom he appealed.


52 Some Results of the Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute, 2, Snow Hill, Alabama, Normal and Industrial Institute, Pamphlet box, Educ 8530.15.7, Widener Library, Harvard College.

53 Some Results of the Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute, 3.

54 Washington and Scott, Tuskegee and Its People, 266.

55 See Enck, “Black Self-Help in the Progressive Era.” Washington’s enthusiasm for Snow Hill had begun to wane over the years, in part because the GEB and other philanthropic foundations gradually shifted resources away from private industrial schools to lobbying efforts on behalf of public education in the South. But Edwards also brought Washington’s disdain upon himself. Not only did Edwards join a symposium organized by W. E. B. Du Bois and Oswald Garrison Villard for the Association of Negro Industrial and Secondary Schools, an organization hostile to Washington’s methods, but recent inspectors from Tuskegee had also found Edwards offering two-year courses in Latin and German “for those planning to take up higher work in the professions.” Cooper, Between Struggle and Hope, 42; Enck, “Black Self-Help in the Progressive Era,” 86.

56 Edwards’s papers in the Harvard University archive suggest that Edwards had developed an extensive network of donors during summers spent at Harvard’s Summer School.

57 On the genre of the carte de visite featuring African American figures before and after Emancipation, see Willis, Envisioning Emancipation; Wallace, “Framing the Black Soldier.” Wallace situates these before-and-after images in the broader history of the Black soldier portrait: “Photography, in the popularity and proliferation of the Black soldier portrait, participated in nothing less than the genesis of African American manhood as a coherent category of civil identity and experience in the postbellum political imaginary” (247). In many instances, however, given the popularity of photographs that purported to show slaves becoming soldiers in the blink of an eye, this iconography could also be used to “conscript” Black soldiers into images that capture “coerced agency” and “simulated contentment” (259). Wallace is here drawing on Hartman, Scenes of Subjection. Jacqueline Fear-Segel describes the use of before-and-after photography at Carlisle in similar terms. “Before the first contingent of pupils had arrived in Pennsylvania from Dakota
Territory, Pratt had already enlisted the services of local photographer J.N. Choate. Choate brought his mobile studio onto campus to ensure their ‘before’ images were captured the very same day. Pratt’s objective was double stranded: firstly, to Americanize Native children in preparation for assimilation into mainstream society; secondly, to convince white Americans that this project to transform Native youth from ‘savagery’ into ‘civilization’ was both desirable and possible.” Fear-Segel, “Facing the Binary,” 156. On before-and-after photography in the context of Bookerite industrial education, see Field, *Uplift Cinema*; Baker, “Missionary Positions.”

Before-and-after photographs, Jordan Bear and Kate Palmer Albers write, “often obtain their special identity from the ways in which the photographs relate both to one another, and, most intriguingly, to a third, generally unseen, event. This missing pivot is the implicit source of the development whose outer markers are imaged in the before-and-after pair.” Bear and Albers, “Photography’s Time Zone,” 2. See also Sidlauskas, “Before-and-After.” I am grateful to Susan Sidlauskas and Kathleen Pierce for encouraging me to think more about the genre of the before-and-after photograph and for introducing me to this literature.

Sekula, “The Body and the Archive.”

Yates, *Control through Communication*, 78. While we most often think of the report as a fundamentally mediated mode of communication, moreover, Oz Frankel notes that the genre originally connoted physical presence. The first reports were submitted by functionaries who could not appear in person or “report for duty.” Frankel, *States of Inquiry*, 36.

The GEB did fund Snow Hill early in the twentieth century but gradually withdrew its support. This change of heart was likely due to reports of the school’s inefficiency that reached the GEB from its field officers, but also Washington’s increasing ambivalence about Edwards could not have helped. The GEB’s ultimate decision to cease funds to Snow Hill was certainly not due to any lack of effort on Edwards’s part. The beleaguered principal maintained a nearly unbroken stream of correspondence with officials at the GEB into the 1920s, always an adamant champion of the work being done at Snow Hill and (nearly) always comporting himself according to the bureaucratic standards of foundation philanthropy.

William J. Edwards to Wallace Buttrick, October 3, 1911, box 2, folder 17a, ALA 8 Snow Hill 1906–1914, General Education Board Records, Rockefeller Archive Center.


Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 139–47, 162–64.
67 Thank you to Barbara Mennel for helping me to think through this scene. On the history of Micheaux’s film, which was for many years thought lost and whose intertitles were translated back into English after the discovery of a Spanish-language version, see Gaines, *Fire and Desire*.

68 Purcell, *Miracle in Mississippi*, 89; Harrison and Freeman, *Piney Woods School*, 61–62. One of Jones’s weekly addresses to the student body suggests a sense of camaraderie across this mixed-ability community, even if these inspirational anecdotes are not without a certain note of pathos or pity: “When you are out with the shovel and pick, building roads, when you are out making brick—even these one-armed boys and the boy without any hands who shovels sand; when you are doing carpentry, feeding the pigs, milking the cows, caring for the poultry, running the dynamo, hoeing in the garden, or plowing on the farm, we want you to be able to say, ‘I did something too, didn’t I, Piney Woods?’” Jones, *The Spirit of Piney Woods*, 55. Like Edwards, Jones was a committed but not rigidly orthodox proponent of industrial education. Unlike Edwards, Jones had no connection to Tuskegee or to Booker T. Washington and was thus left to establish his own network of philanthropic connections. Jones’s earliest efforts were sporadic and ad hoc, but fundraising at Piney Woods soon became a well-oiled machine. Ultimately, these efforts provided for Piney Woods the institutional longevity Snow Hill never achieved. Snow Hill closed in 1873, after decades of financial hardship.

69 Quoted in Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 200. This officer, the Rosenwald Fund’s Edwin Embree, did concede that at Piney Woods and elsewhere “there are picturesque personalities who are sincerely trying to do their best.” But he ultimately concluded that these personalities frequently only made matters worse. Philanthropist George Foster Peabody agreed, although he acknowledged “differing points of view on Mr. Jones” and gradually came to respect the ambitious principal. “I think he is an exceptional man and some aspects of his work prove this,” Peabody wrote. “He has a publicity faculty, undoubtedly—something too much in evidence—but he is the one Negro of ability whom I know who goes through the West and stirs up money.” George Foster Peabody to Walter B. Hill, October 22, 1931, box 96, folder 864 geb, Miss 58 Piney Woods School 1909–30, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY. Peabody was more ambivalent on this point in a letter to Leo M. Favrot on November 16 of that same year. “Opinions differ so much with regard to the Piney Woods Country Life School in Mississippi,” Peabody wrote to the geb general field agent, “that I hesitate to express an opinion with any assurance.” box 96, folder 864 geb, Miss 58 Piney Woods School 1909–30.

70 The idea for the school took root in conversations with the Black residents of Braxton shortly after Jones’s arrival in May 1909. Having brought with him nothing in the way of funding or savings, Jones initially met his expenses
with the donations collected weekly on his behalf by several area churches. Harrison and Freeman, *Piney Woods School*, 31. Nights found Jones drumming up support for the idea of a new school among his new neighbors, but his days were spent under a cedar tree with an ever-growing number of students who took lessons “without the formality of buildings and desks and blackboards.” Jones, *Piney Woods and Its Story*, 67.

71 Bailey, “The Cotton Blossom Singers.”

72 Jones’s unconventional methods bordered on the presumptuous. In 1909, for example, he sent Wallace Buttrick of the GEB a peculiar letter of introduction. After first outlining his school’s mission and needs, Jones submitted paperwork for Edwards’s erstwhile interlocutor to complete: “May I anticipate your kindness in filling out the enclosed blank and returning the same at your earliest convenience[?]” He asked when the board would meet to discuss the following year’s budget and requested the names of the committee members in charge. With this information, of course, Jones hoped to better navigate the funding process. But he also meant to signal his familiarity with modern philanthropy. Predictably, Jones’s request was declined.


74 The letter writer continues: “The people receiving them are affected by them according to their temperaments. Some are stirred to respond, others are irritated, but all feel, I think, that they would like to know something about the school. If the school is not good, people should know it. If it is good, Mr. Jones should in some way be told that his method of raising money is not a wise one.” Miss Marian Homans to the General Education Board, November 22, 1923, box 96, folder 863 GEB, Miss 58 Piney Woods School 1909–30. Homans revisited the issue a few days later, after receiving a reply to her letter. “I think it is a great pity,” she wrote to her correspondent at the GEB, “that they should use such means for raising money as the begging letters sent out by children who are students there. People are becoming prejudiced against the school for this reason, and I feel for the good of the school that Mr. Jones should know of the feeling.” Miss Marian Homans to the General Education Board, November 27, 1923, box 96, folder 863 GEB, Miss 58 Piney Woods School 1909–30. In response to Homans’s letters, H. J. Thorkelson of the GEB noted a report in the board’s files on Piney Woods stating that “Mr. Jones, the Principal, is able and highly thought of by the people of Mississippi. He has built up the school entirely by his own efforts. It is a small school doing the work of some of our county training schools.” When pressed further by Homans about whether the GEB would be in a position to share with Jones her concerns about his methods, Thorkelson replied, “I am quite sure that any suggestion to the authorities of Piney Woods School regarding questionable methods of soliciting funds will come with greater force from the recipients of such letters than from any of the officers
of our board. This is particularly true in this case, as we have not contributed to this school.”

Jones did propose his own life story as a representative case, though he did so by invoking the far more prominent figure of Booker T. Washington. Many educators before him, of course, had sought to take advantage of Washington’s popularity and influence with donors. But although Jones had no relationship with Washington, he nonetheless encouraged donors to draw the comparison for themselves. Around 1911, for example, Jones solicited donations on letterhead that reprinted in full a two-hundred-word article published by the *Literary Digest*. Running the length of the page’s left margin with its title prominently displayed—“Young Booker Washington”—the article-as-illustration effectively claims the founder of Tuskegee as a Piney Woods booster. There is no indication that Washington ever supported Jones’s school, but so positioned the article also hints that Washington’s story is more relevant to the history of Piney Woods and its deservingness than was the biography of the school’s founder. Although his was likewise a story of hardship and accomplishment, Jones sought to make the case for Piney Woods without making himself the focus of attention in any particular way. Rather, he was a kind of case; his story could be generalized as the story of Washington.

There are no funds at the disposal of this Board that can be contributed for the purpose you suggest.” But though Buttrick’s refusal was direct and to the point, the fact that Carter’s letter and others like it were preserved by the Geb raises questions about how these documents were actually read. On the one hand, it is clear that Carter’s letter was held onto as evidence of how the “notorious beggars” of Piney Woods emotionally manipulated unsuspecting
donors. But on the other hand, the letters produced en masse by members of the student aid department might also have been flagged for the routine-ness of their production. Indeed, geb officials may have suspected Jones of having learned the lessons of organized charity too well. If the student aid department was created with the goal of streamlining and rationalizing the writing of case studies, that is, the letters it produced bore their provenance rather too openly: they were standardized and even interchangeable narrative histories and as such potentially devoid of any truly personal content. Carter’s letter and others like it thus give the lie to the antisentimental project of foundation philanthropy while also exemplifying the practices adopted by Black industrial schools in order to square this circle. Need was still to be earnestly expressed, it seemed, no matter how putatively objective the evaluations process. The corollary was also true. As students at Piney Woods understood, strategically sentimental appeals that purposefully confused the case and the stock figure would only find success by also showing the work involved in doing so. Wallace Buttrick to Dean Carter, April 28, 1925, box 96, folder 863 geb, Miss 58 Piney Woods School 1909–30.


82 Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, 483.

83 This distinction holds even if we speculate that the Black amputee was himself a soldier, a likely conclusion given that he also meets Lincoln in the park between the White House and the War Department. Even as a veteran, that is, the Black amputee must tell a “pitiful story” in order to receive the generosity that the white soldiers receive on sight.

84 Ultimately, then, “colored man with one leg” is best understood as an economic rather than a sentimental sign. Lincoln’s designation for the Black amputee, in fact, operates much like the check on which it is written. Just as the check stands in for cash or goods deposited with a bank, so too is “colored man with one leg” a sign that indexes, and effectively replaces, the material referent to which it is conventionally bound. In both cases, however, this relationship holds only as long as the sign in question remains in circulation. Like the check, which becomes worthless once redeemed, “colored man with one leg” loses all economic value outside of the charitable exchange in which it originated. When he is no longer the “bearer” of the check—once he cashes it—the Black amputee ceases to be the “colored man with one leg.” He is instead the possessor of five dollars, wages earned for a command performance of deservingness before the president.

85 Philip, Zong!, 191.

86 Philip, Zong!, 199.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2


88 Philip, Zong!, 200, emphasis in the original.


3. The Work of the Image

1 As Charles Musser notes, the early Edison demonstration films, produced a year before commercial production began, depict worlds in which work, pleasure, and socializing are integrated. In Blacksmithing Scene (1893), for instance, three blacksmiths (played by Edison employees), hammer a heated metal rod that has been removed from a fire and placed on an anvil. One of the men then pulls out a bottle of beer, and each worker takes a drink before then resuming their labors. By 1893, work and socializing were increasingly separated, and drinking on the job was considered part of a more or less bygone era. As such, Blacksmithing Scene is a nostalgic enterprise. In the film, as Musser concludes, “the newest and most modern technology is used to prop up and document a past that it is quickly making obsolete.” Musser, “At the Beginning,” 17.

2 Tosi, Cinema before Cinema, 33.

3 Cartwright, “‘Experiments of Destruction,’” 129.


5 Gunning, “In Your Face,” 142–43.

6 In this regard, photography was an extension of Marey’s earlier work with graphic inscription. Drawing on his training as a physician, Marey had invented a number of mechanical devices to measure minute physiological movements like the beating of the heart, the firing of a nerve, or the contracting of a muscle. These devices involved complex systems of wires, India-rubber tubing, and pneumatic sensors that were connected directly to the experimental subject. See Marey, Movement, 1–14. Once isolated, the physiological mechanism under study caused a stylus to move across the recording surface such that the body itself was the direct source of the tracing. This principle was the basis for Marey’s sphygmograph and myograph, which measured blood pressure and muscular contraction, but also for the systems he designed to chart the human gait, the flapping of insect wings, and the flight of birds. Doane, The Emergence of Cinematic Time, 47–48. Marey hoped to find in Muybridge’s methods a means of recording movements in cases where the direct connections required of graphic inscription were impractical.

7 Muybridge’s images were produced by a battery of cameras, each of which was activated by a wire as the horse ran past. The resultant photographs show
the general trajectory of the horse’s movement. But each image was taken from a different vantage and the time between exposures could not be determined with any accuracy, precluding precise measurements after the fact. There are many scholarly accounts of the evolution of Marey’s chronophotography. Marta Braun’s remains authoritative. Braun, *Picturing Time*, 42–57. See also Auerbach, *Body Shots*; Cresswell, *On the Move*. Popular conflations of these two figures notwithstanding, as Marta Braun has noted, Marey and Muybridge thus held vastly different commitments. Muybridge was more interested in photography than in science. For Marey, on the other hand, photography was ultimately only a means to an end. His principal concern was with the “objective, measurably accurate, analytic, and systematic” study of movement as such. Braun, *Picturing Time*, 229.

8 Quoted in Rabinbach, “The European Science of Work,” 486.

9 Quoted in Daston and Galison, “The Image of Objectivity,” 81. For Daston and Galison, Marey’s research typifies the new paradigm of objectivity that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Previously, scientists associated objectivity with a process of active selection or curation—in the case of the scientific atlas, for instance—that ensured representativeness by weeding out the idiosyncrasies of nature. The goal was “to make nature safe for science; to replace raw experience—the accidental, contingent of specific individual objects—with digested experience” (85). By the late nineteenth century, a new mode of objectivity took hold that sought to suppress any such intervention. The scientist’s goal was now to eliminate “suspect mediation” of any kind and “to forewarn judgment, interpretation, and even the testimony of one’s own senses” in favor of allowing the phenomena at hand to speak for themselves. Scientific objectivity, in other words, had come to be opposed to the subjectivity of the scientist.

10 Marey, *Movement*, 139.

11 Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*.

12 See Rabinbach, “The Body without Fatigue.”


17 Marey’s methods of graphic inscription had been in use at the Salpêtrière since the late 1870s to record the movements of patients diagnosed with hysteria and epilepsy. The first photographic studies of hysteria began not long thereafter, furthering a tradition of clinical photography established by Guillaume-Benjamin-Amand Duchenne, Charcot’s mentor. When Albert Londe took over the photography department at the Salpêtrière in 1884, he quickly realized the potential of chronophotography for studying the movements of
patients with a range of diagnoses. After consulting with Marey, Londe built a series of multiple-lens cameras with which to study hysteria, pathological gaits, tremors, and epileptic seizures. The resultant images were both a departure from and a continuation of the often eroticized photography of hysteria that filled the pages of *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*. Just a year after Londe began at the Salpêtrière, the University of Pennsylvania hired Muybridge to carry out an ambitious study of human and animal locomotion. In addition to horses ambling and women ascending stairs, Muybridge captured the lumbering gait of a man with “a history of long-standing and increasing ataxia” and the “crouching shuffle” of a laborer diagnosed with “stuporous melancholia” after being “constantly exposed [to] fine particles of dust mixed with lead.” As Tim Creswell notes, the differences between Marey’s and Muybridge’s studies of pathological locomotion concern matters of spectacle in addition to those of narrative. “While Muybridge gave us pictures of naked people moving as best they could, Marey gives us a distillation of their movement with bodies removed. In Muybridge’s images it is hard to read the movement between the frames, in Marey’s it is all there is.” Creswell, *On the Move*, 81. See also Mayer, *Wissenschaft vom Gehen*, 187; Aubert, “From Photography to Cinematography,” 262; Dercum, “A Study of Some Normal and Abnormal Movements,” 121.


22 Quoted in Braun and Whitcombe, “Marey, Muybridge, and Londe,” 220.

23 Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, 13. Canguilhem writes:

> The end result of this evolutionary process is the formation of a theory of the relations between the normal and the pathological, according to which the pathological phenomena found in living organisms are nothing more than quantitative variations, greater or lesser according to corresponding physiological phenomena. Semantically, the pathological is designated as departing from the normal not so much by *a-* or *dys-* as by *hyper-* or *hypo-*. While retaining the ontological theory’s soothing confidence in the possibility of technical conquest of disease, this approach is far from considering health and sickness as qualitatively opposed, or as forces joined in battle. The need to reestablish continuity in order to gain more knowledge for more effective action is such that the concept of disease would finally vanish. The conviction that one can scientifically restore the norm is such that in the end it annuls the pathological. Disease
is no longer the object of anguish for the healthy man; it has become instead the object of study for the theorist of health. (13)

26 Mayer, Wissenschaft vom Gehen, 187.
27 Mayer, Wissenschaft vom Gehen, 187.
28 Schwartz, “Torque.” Marey’s most immediate contribution to this field was the technical advance that his methods represented over the largely theoretical approach favored by previous researchers such as Ernst, Wilhelm, and Eduard Weber. The German Weber brothers mapped out the position of the body at fourteen different moments in a single gait cycle and used mathematical calculation to conclude that walking is a physiological falling-forward arrested momentarily by the pendulum-like swing of each leg. Kirtley, Clinical Gait Analysis, 183. Marey’s practical studies helped later researchers debunk the so-called pendulum theory and also helped develop new devices and techniques of motion capture. Rather than using electric bulbs, for instance, Otto Fischer and Christian Wilhelm Braune strapped Geisel tubes, a predecessor to neon lights, to the joints of their research subjects. The images they produced were the first three-dimensional analyses of human locomotion. Baker, “The History of Gait Analysis before the Advent of Modern Computers,” 334. The “interrupted light studies” conducted in the 1950s by Howard Eberhart and Verne Inman at the University of California, Berkeley, for instance, used “small ophthalmic electric bulbs attached to the subject at estimated joint centers of the leg, iliac crest, and heel and toe of the shoe.” These studies were of greatest value, the authors conclude, in “improv[ing] the locomotor system in individuals who have suffered damage to it.” Eberhart and Inman, “An Evaluation of Experimental Procedures,” 1216, 1213.

29 The division of labor between Frank and Lillian Gilbreth is far from clear in their extensive oeuvre. Although Frank was clearly the public face of the business they ran together, Lillian was arguably the more accomplished of the two. One of the first women to earn a PhD in engineering, Lillian may well have written most of the articles and perhaps even the books attributed only to Frank. As Melissa Gregg elaborates, “Because Lillian Gilbreth was the wife of the more publicly known management consultant Frank Gilbreth, her position as a founder of human factors engineering and workplace psychology is often overlooked in conventional academic accounts.” Gregg, Counterproductive, 11. Rather than endeavoring to determine who wrote (or did) what, I simply refer to the Gilbreths collectively wherever possible in what follows.
30 Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, 106.
Marta Braun, for instance, does indeed find candid acknowledgment of Marey’s outsized influence on the Gilbreths in unpublished writings and in private correspondence. In a typescript of a management seminar, for instance, Frank confided that Marey was “the man I wish had never been born” (quoted in *Picturing Time*, 347). Frank made a similar point in the same playful tone when writing to Lillian in 1919: “Prof. Jevon’s book is wonderful. He anticipated many of your best ideas. He is your Marey.” Frank Gilbreth to Lillian Gilbreth, January 5, 1919, box 101, folder 1, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth Papers, ca. 1869–2000, Purdue University Special Collections. The Gilbreths had far less to say about the French savant, however, in published writings and public talks. Although Taylor’s influence could be safely acknowledged and adequately qualified, Marey was mentioned only in passing. Marey plays just a bit part, in fact, in the intellectual genealogy sketched out in *Applied Motion Study* (1916). There the groundbreaking inventor becomes an admirably talented but overcommitted dilettante: “Marey, with no thought of motion study in our present use of the term in his mind, developed, as one line of his multitudinous activities, a method of recording paths of motion, but never succeeded in his efforts to record the direction of motions photographically.” Gilbreth and Gilbreth, *Applied Motion Study*, 62. The narcissism of small differences is worth flagging here. But if the Gilbreths downplay the usefulness of Marey’s devices and the value of his studies, they also set the stage for a heroic tale of the achievement of specialists—like themselves—narrowly focused on industrial efficiency:

The problem that presented itself, then, to us who needed and desired instruments of precision, applicable to our motion study and to our time study, was to invent, design, and construct devices that would overcome lacks in the early and existing methods. We needed devices to record the direction as well as the path or orbits of motions, and to reduce the cost of obtaining all time study and motion study data. These were needed not only from the scientific standpoint, but also from the standpoint of obtaining full cooperation of the mechanics and other workers. Many of these had, as a class, become suspicious of time study taken secretly by those who, they thought, did not know enough about the practical features of the trade to take the time study properly, and could not prove that the items were right after putting them on paper. Here was absolute pioneer work to be done in inventing devices that would record times, paths, and directions of motions simultaneously. (63)

While neither figure is specifically mentioned, readers of *Applied Motion Study* would have recognized a familiar critique of Taylor and of scientific management. And because Marey was not a household name in the United States, few would have doubted that the devices Gilbreth “invent[ed], design[ed], and construct[ed]” were indeed a real advance over “the early and existing methods.” Crucial to such an advance, Gilbreth argues, was adapt-
ing physiological motion study to industry’s needs; Taylor’s approach thus corrects for Marey’s lack of practical focus. But these new methods were also useful “from the standpoint of obtaining full cooperation of the mechanics and other workers” generally reluctant to accommodate efficiency experts. Finding themselves part of a profession suspected of ruthlessly maximizing productivity at workers’ expense, the Gilbreths thus presented themselves as the “good exception” to the Taylorist rule. Writing to Lillian from Germany in 1914, Frank argued, “We must have our own organization and we must have our own writing so made that the worker thinks we are the good exce­ption.” Quoted in Price, “Frank and Lillian Gilbreth,” 5, emphasis in original.

In order to differentiate themselves from Taylor, the Gilbreths borrowed wholesale from Marey, generally without attribution of any kind. Not only did the Gilbreths present many of Marey’s devices as their own inventions, but they also mimicked many of the experimental techniques developed by the French savant.

32 Gilbreth, Bricklaying System, xi.

33 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, Applied Motion Study, 114.

34 The Gilbreths soon began placing a finely graduated clock in the corner of every film they produced, which allowed them to determine the time required for each of the worker’s motions to be determined precisely as well. A comparable device similarly placed was, only a few years earlier, widely regarded as Marey’s trademark. Rabinbach, “The European Science of Work,” 489. Always willing to repackage a modest improvement as a conceptual game changer, the Gilbreths argued that their “micro-chronometer” far surpassed its predecessors because it could “determine the speed of a motion down to the one-millionth of an hour.” Popular Science Monthly, “Two and a Half Miles a Minute,” 227. This unlikely unit suggests just how anxious the Gilbreths were to distinguish themselves from Marey. The lesson they learned from Marey’s clock, however, was also about self-promotion. For just as Marey had done with his own name years earlier, the Gilbreths ensured that the face of the micro-chronometer that appeared in each of their films bore the GILBRETH logo in large block letters. Beyond its role in self-promotion, the GILBRETH logo also helps us to understand the pedagogical shortcomings of micromotion studies. Itself an image, the GILBRETH logo functions differently from the images produced with the devices on which it is inscribed. The logo stands as an image of labor accomplished; it makes visible at a glance the work that has gone into creating and sustaining the GILBRETH brand. At the same time, the logo requires no exegetical work from the viewer; its meaning is intuitively clear. The images produced by micromotion study, on the other hand, are images of labor in both senses of the word. They capture scenes of work and, by isolating individual moments or gestural phrases, make these scenes available for closer scrutiny. But the
images produced by micromotion study do demand work from the viewer, namely frame-by-frame analysis and calculation. Rather than speaking in what Marey called “the language of the phenomena themselves,” these images require mediation. Indeed, for micromotion studies to have pedagogical value, they had first to be translated into written instructions. It was only by looking to Marey’s electric light bulb method that the Gilbreths developed a mode of image production that realized the aspirations of self-evidence inscribed in the *Gilbreth* logo. On images and the labor of mediation, see Latour, “What Is Iconoclash?”; Latour, “Drawing Things Together.”

35 Colvin, “The Latest Development in Motion Study,” 938.

36 The micro-chronometer method, while more accurate, required completing and comparing different images after the fact.

37 On chart junk, see Tufte, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*.

38 In a series of experiments that would come to shape the field of fatigue research, Mosso recorded the movements of a single finger performing a simple, repetitive motion over a finite period of time using a graphic inscription apparatus. A battery of physiological tests made it clear that the decline in muscular performance evident in the downward arc of inscription was dependent not on the proportion of work done but rather on the production of toxic substances in the muscles. Ioteyko, *The Science of Labour and Its Organization*; Vatin, “Arbeit und Ermüdung.”


40 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, *Fatigue Study*, 41.

41 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, *Fatigue Study*, 4. This scene, of course, resembles nothing so much as the Lumière’s *Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895).

42 In addition to human factors and ergonomics, the Gilbreths also anticipate what Aimi Hamraie calls the “disability neutral” aspect of Universal Design, where there is no mention of disability but rather an emphasis on all users. See Hamraie, *Building Access*.


The chronophotographic studies of colonial subjects carried out by Regnault under Marey’s tutelage find an unlikely echo in the work of sociologist Marcel Mauss, whose investigations into the “techniques of the body” touch on the pathology of primitive locomotion and on the pedagogy of the military march. At first glance, Mauss’s famous essay would seem to have little concern with the methods developed by Regnault and Marey, just as his findings appear to repudiate the conclusions they reach. Whereas Regnault and Marey use chronophotography to determine the most natural mode of human locomotion, Mauss rejects essentialist ideas of this sort out of hand. There is no such thing as the natural body or a natural movement, he contends; the body is rather a product of social, psychological, and biological processes that vary across different eras and cultures. What can be observed of the simple act of walking is for Mauss but the clearest manifestation of a truth that applies to bodily comportment of all kinds: how one walks depends on where one grew up, what one does, and how one thinks. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that Mauss does in fact share with Marey and Regnault a commonality of both means and ends. For if Marey promised to capture the hidden complexity of everyday movements, Mauss sought to rescue the body from the conceptual catchall of the “miscellaneous,” a category of phenomena that we often presume to be self-evident but that are actually understood only casually, if at all. Mauss’s tripartite approach—the body as social, psychological, and biological construct—is thus shaped by the same revelatory impulse that informs the chronophotography of human locomotion. Nor is Mauss’s antiessentialism absolute. After ruminating on the blind spots created by academic specialization and reminiscing fondly about his own experience drilling French cadets, Mauss concludes by positing a more or less fundamental difference between primitive and civilized gaits:

I believe that this whole notion of the education of races selected on the basis of a determinate efficiency is one of the fundamental moments of history itself: education of the vision, education in walking, ascending, descending, running. It consists especially of education in composition. And the latter is, above all, a retarding mechanism, a mechanism inhibiting disorderly movements; this retardation subsequently allows a coordinated response of coordinated movement setting off in the direction of a chosen goal. This resistance to emotional seizure is something fundamental in social and mental life. It separates, it even classifies, the so-called primitive societies according to whether they display more brutal, unreflected, unconscious reaction or, on the contrary more isolated, precise actions governed by the clear consciousness. (Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 474–75)

Mauss’s earlier contention that there is no bodily comportment prior to or distinct from the social, psychological, and biological forces that consti-
tute the body is here turned on its head. He equates the primitive body with a physiological ground zero, its movements with a mode of behavior that preexisted the educative and “retarding mechanism[s]” of modernity. The latter are the techniques by which the primitive subject’s “brutal, unreflected, unconscious reaction” to the world is inhibited, and “disorderly movements” and “emotional seizure[s]” are replaced by the habits of restraint and composure. Mauss thus translates into descriptive prose the visual syntax of pathological locomotion established some thirty years earlier by Marey and his collaborators. The wayward trajectories and irregular patterns traced across the dark surface of the chronophotographic image find a parallel here in the jerky, uncontrolled movements of the primitive subject, just as the gradually arcing curves and evenly spaced repetitions that mark the horizon of rehabilitation become the “coordinated response of coordinated movement setting off in the direction of a chosen goal” typical of the modern or civilized subject.

52 Rabinbach, _The Human Motor_, 183.

53 Camiscioli, _Reproducing the French Race_, 60. See also Frader, _Breadwinners and Citizens_.

54 Camiscioli, _Reproducing the French Race_, 63. As Camiscioli observes, Amar’s preference for Kabyles over other North African populations had to do with long-standing beliefs that members of that group were whiter and more assimilable than other immigrants from the Maghreb.

55 Amar, _The Physiology of Industrial Organisation_, 210.

56 Amar, _The Physiology of Industrial Organisation_, v.

57 Musser, _The Emergence of Cinema_, 261.

58 Whissel, _Picturing American Modernity_, 22. Recently scholars have illuminated the broadly therapeutic nature of the Spanish-American War, the conflict that first brought the United States onto the imperial stage. For a generation of men who had never taken up arms, this war offered the opportunity to repair a sense of masculinity injured not by enemy fire but by the many indignities of modern life. This is not to say that the United States did not go to war in 1898 for political or economic reasons. Of these there is no shortage. As Kristin Hoganson has written, historians cite as motivating factors “economic ambitions, annexationist aspirations, strategic concerns, partisan posturing, humanitarian sympathy for the Cubans, a desire to avenge the _Maine_, a psychic crisis, and Darwinian anxieties.” If there is a single thread to be drawn through this list of plausible explanations, Hoganson argues, it is that gender functions in each as “a motivating ideology and a political posture.” To simplify a richly nuanced argument, the felt need to shore up Anglo-American masculinity against the threats of overcivilization, the New Woman, the closing of the frontier, and the social progress of African Americans dovetailed with a pro-imperialist agenda that championed
the benefits of empire for colonizer and colonized alike. Those benefits, to be sure, were not evenly distributed. If for the colonizer war promised to restore masculine prerogative, the colonized were often figured as effete and helplessly in need of rescue. The rewards were no more certain for the African American soldiers who took up arms in Cuba and the Philippines. If pro-war advocates hoped that Black participation would earn respect and win social concessions at home, the martial ideal on which such thinking relied was often kept out of the Black soldier’s reach. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 7, 9. Gatewood, “Smoked Yankees” and the Struggle for Empire, 4.

59 See Banta, *Taylored Lives*.


62 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.” Addressing the formal malleability of the actuality, film historian Stephen Bottomore has differentiated three subgenres. The “conflict-zone actuality” is shot on location and shows military activity of one sort or another. The “arranged actuality” is shot in the conflict zone with real troops, but the action has been set up specifically for the purpose of being filmed. Finally, the “war-related actuality” is not shot in the conflict zone but is thematically related to war and represents military action, as in films of charging troops shot elsewhere. Bottomore, “Filming, Faking and Propaganda,” xxvi.

63 Martha Banta argues that the 1890s and the Spanish-American War more particularly brought about a shift in masculine ideals represented in the gradual replacement of “barbaric” narratives of martial heroism to systems and stories of efficiency: “Eventually the inventor, the manager, and the technocrat—systematizers represented by Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Herbert Hoover—would become cultural heroes, displacing military leaders and old-time entrepreneurs, men more appropriate to cruder times when Americans still honored ‘the archaic traits’ of overtly predatory methods.” Banta, *Taylored Lives*, 55.

64 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.”

65 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.”


67 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.”

68 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.”

69 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.”

70 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.”

71 Edison Manufacturing Co., “War Extra Catalogue.”
72 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, *Motion Study for the Handicapped*, 33.

73 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, “The Engineer, the Cripple, and the New Education,” 52, 54.

74 Frank Gilbreth to Lillian Gilbreth, January 5, 1919, box 101, folder 1, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth Papers, ca. 1869–2000.

75 Frank Gilbreth to Lillian Gilbreth, January 5, 1919. And even if things did not work out, Frank continued, he could still “probably sell them a clock … with a nice case for $200 to $150.00.”

76 Frank Gilbreth to Lillian Gilbreth, January 5, 1919.

77 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, “Motion Study of Epilepsy and Its Relation to Industry,” 1, MSP 8 box 120, folder 6, 0843, 1920, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth Library of Management Research and Professional Papers, Purdue University Special Collections.

78 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, “Motion Study of Epilepsy and Its Relation to Industry,” 1.


80 Gilbreth and Gilbreth, “Motion Study of Epilepsy and Its Relation to Industry,” 8.

81 Frank Gilbreth to Lillian Gilbreth, May 16, 1920.


4. *Institutional Rhythms*

1 Jackson, “Worksong,” 848.

2 Jackson, “Worksong,” 848; Titon, “North America/Black America,” 154. Though familiar enough to pass for common sense, Jackson’s definition of the work song, which he shared with John and Alan Lomax, has not been universally embraced. Marek Korczynski, Michael Pickering, and Emma Robertson argue that Jackson’s “functionalist” approach is too limiting. Endeavoring to loosen the “conceptual straitjacket of the work song,” the authors offer a broader history of “singing at work” that encompasses moves beyond the use of song to coordinate movements to consider how even “background” music—like that pumped into factories—has impacted the cultural history of work. Korczynski, Pickering, and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, 22–23.

3 Winick, “Folklore and/in Music,” 469. Winick usefully elaborates on Jackson’s skeletal definition:
In many cultures, laborers use work songs and work music in the performance of daily tasks. In this context music serves the function of coordinating the efforts of a group of people who need to do things at the same time or at the same speed. In hauling a heavy yard, up the mast of a square-rigged ship, or moving a section of railroad track a quarter-inch to the right, using nine-pound hammers to tap on the rails, a single man would have no effect at all. But a group of men, pulling or tapping at the same time, can get the job done, and music can be used to keep them in time with one another. Music used to coordinate labor takes many forms, including fife-and-drum bands or bagpipes for soldiers on the march, drumming for oarsmen on large galleys, and women singing rhythmic “waulking song” while they beat on the fibers of newly-woven cloth in order to shrink it. (469, emphasis in original)

For an early discussion of the importance of the sea shanty to the work song genre, see Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas.

4 Jackson, Wake Up Dead Man, 30.

5 Lomax, The Land Where the Blues Began, 261. As John Lomax wrote, he and Alan collected “the old Negro tunes the Texas prison system has kept alive, while the prisoners died.” Lomax, Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly, 93.


7 Brown, “Negro Folk Expression,” 116. For Brown, the work songs performed in Southern penitentiaries are also defined by the candor of their desperation: “From these men—long termers, lifers, three-time losers—come songs brewed in bitterness. This is not the double-talk of the slave seculars, but the naked truth of desperate men telling what is on their brooding minds. Only to collectors who have won their trust—such as the Lomaxes, Lawrence Gellert, and Josh White—and only when the white captain is far enough away, do the prisoners confide these songs. Then they sing not loudly but deeply their hatred of the brutality of the chain-gang” (117).

8 Debates about the social value of prison labor were a cornerstone of the prison reform movement in the 1880s and 1890s. As historian Rebecca McLennan has shown, productive work was central to US penal practices from the early republic through the 1930s. But the system confronted by late nineteenth-century reformers was rooted more particularly in the turn-of-the-century Auburn system of penal management. Whereas in the competing Pennsylvania model inmates worked silently in single cells at tasks like cobbling and harness making, prisoners in the Auburn system were isolated by night and put to congregate labor for private contractors by day. Auburn prisoners were likewise subject to strict oversight that combined military-style discipline with industrial management. As the Auburn system was expanded and refined over the years, three dominant modes of contract prison labor emerged. In the “prison factory system,” outside contractors set up shop
in the prison itself; in the “piece-price system,” contractors supplied raw materials and paid the state for the goods that prisoners produced; in the “convict lease system,” contractors took full possession of inmates they employed beyond the prison walls. In a fourth and less widespread system, the “public account system,” prisoners worked for the state, which sold the products they manufactured on the free market. Facing arguments from labor unions who contended that prison labor unfairly competed with free laborers and thus drove down wages beyond the prison walls, reformers and prison administrators soon advocated the “state-use system.” This system mandated that prison labor could only be used to produce goods for the state, thus in principle avoiding any harmful incursion into the free market. The rationalization of contract prison labor continued apace through the postbellum years, despite the efforts of Reconstruction-era reformers to reign in abuses and to abolish contract prison labor outright. By the 1880s, nearly every state prison in the country used contract prison labor of some sort. McLennan, The Crisis of Imprisonment, 103–4, 134; Ayers, Vengeance and Justice, 191–92.

The exploitation and abuse to which contract prison labor in all its forms inevitably led garnered most attention in the case of the convict lease system. As historian Blake McKelvey has written, after the Civil War penal practices in the North and South began to take separate paths. If the North witnessed a burst of interest in reforming contract prison labor during Reconstruction, the necessity of rebuilding public infrastructure and accommodating the ever-growing number of prisoners dominated all other concerns in the South. The convict lease system was adopted as the best solution to both problems. Not only did this system allow prisoners to be managed without the necessity of building expensive prison facilities, but convict labor could also be used to bridge the yawning chasm between the agricultural slave economy of the past and a postbellum present in the earliest stages of industrial development. The convict lease thus “served as an entering wedge, as the only labor force capitalists investing in the South knew they could count on to penetrate dangerous swamps and to work in deadly primitive mines.” Given, moreover, that a disproportionate number of Southern prisoners were African American—due to the passage of the black codes and the rise of Jim Crow, among other reasons—the lease was also a tool of racial discipline. Neither the states nor contractors made much of an effort to hide this fact, or to claim that the work performed by prisoners of any race was of rehabilitative value. As W. E. B. Du Bois decried, “In no part of the modern world has there been so open and conscious a traffic in crime for deliberate social degradation and private profit as in the South since slavery.” McKelvey, “Penal Slavery and Southern Reconstruction,” 178–79; Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America, 698.

9 See Rose, No Right to Be Idle; Trent, Inventing the Feeble Mind.
10 See Jackson, The Negro and His Folklore in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals.

11 On the Port Royal Experiment, see Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction; Foner, Reconstruction; McPherson, The Struggle for Equality; Saville, The Work of Reconstruction; Ochiai, “The Port Royal Experiment Revisited”; Franke, Repair; Carmody, “Rehearsing for Reconstruction.”


13 Allen, Ware, and Garrison, Slave Songs of the United States, xix.

14 Radano, Lying Up a Nation, 223. See also Hochman, Savage Preservation, 93.

15 Cruz, Culture on the Margins, 5. As Cruz goes on to argue, the effect of this mode of interpretation was ultimately to depoliticize the spiritual by extolling the virtues of a preferred and idealized notion of the culturally expressive and performing subject. “This perspective had a dual function: it provided the recognition and admission of a specifiable Black culture, and it granted Black culture admission into the larger and certainly contentious domain of ‘American’ culture. Muted, indeed eclipsed, in the process were the argumentative, critical, and elaborate Black voices that had already emerged in the slave narratives. These voices had preceded the discovery of the Negro spiritual, but were overshadowed by the larger, newer, aesthetic appreciation of the preferred black culture” (7).

16 Brooks, Bodies in Dissent, 298–99. This historical emphasis on the cultural specificity and emotional universalism of the spirituals, however, also obscures how these religious songs were actually used in far worldlier ways. Indeed, the spirituals were often performed during work and might generally be thought of as work songs, were that terrestrial or mundane context not counter to the religious perspective that reformers, missionaries, and educators on the Sea Islands sought to promote. We need look no further, in fact, than to the ubiquity of boat songs in the writing on Black song that emerged from Port Royal. While often religious in content, these songs captured the interest of the Northerners in the Sea Islands less for their imagery or devotional sentiments than for their relation to the working body. As one member of the first group of teachers and superintendents to arrive at Port Royal in March 1862 noted, “Our rowers sing as they row, their own songs—some impromptu and all religious—about the Saviour and the kingdom. Their oars dip in the sparkling water, keeping time to the song.” Quoted in Epstein, Sinful Tunes and Spirituals, 171. Even as the editors of Slave Songs in the United States lamented the seeming paucity of secular songs among the former slaves, they noted that “the same songs are used for rowing as for [religious] shouting” and gave as an example of “Michael Row the Boat Ashore,” at once “a real spiritual—it being the archangel Michael that is
addressed” and the only “pure boat-song” yet to be identified. Allen, Ware, and Garrison, Slave Songs of the United States, xvi. This song also came to the attention of Higginson and Charlotte L. Forten, both of whom remarked on how the singers describe the movements of their bodies and the demands of their labor in the language of metaphysical conceit: “O I wheel to de right and I wheel to de left.” Of this line, which for Higginson demarcates the gulf separating heaven from hell, Forten supposes that “some peculiar motion of the body formed the original accompaniment of the song, but has now fallen into disuse.” Quoted in Krehbiel, Afro-American Folksongs, 49–50. As a later commentator noted, though, “If the rowing singer meant ‘hold’ or ‘stop’ or ‘back’ on my right and catch on my left, even a novice at the oars would have understood the motion as a familiar one in steering.” Krehbiel, Afro-American Folksongs, 50.

17 See Pierce, “The Freedmen at Port Royal.”
18 Stanley, “Beggars Can’t Be Choosers,” 1287.
19 Stanley, “Beggars Can’t Be Choosers,” 1275.
20 American Social Science Association, Constitution, Address, and List of Members, 3.
21 Quoted in Brackett, “Supervisory and Educational Movements,” 520.
22 Today, the conference proceeding belongs to a category of writing that scholars of library and information studies call gray literature. Broadly defined as everything but peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, and commercially published books, gray literature includes reports of various kinds, memoranda, technical documentation, and official documents, among many other genres. Bonato, Searching the Grey Literature, 159. In science studies, the conference proceeding—like the conference papers it includes—is considered a “research process document” somewhere between what Bruno Latour and others describe as the often speculative discussions that happen in the laboratory as an experiment is conducted and the final publication, with its streamlined and often sanitized methods section. Rowley-Jolivet, “The Pivotal Role of Conference Papers,” 9. See also Latour, Laboratory Life.
23 Document and monument: theorists from Jacques Le Goff to Michel Foucault have troubled routine distinctions between the empirical objectivity of the one and the ideological coerciveness of the other. The NCCC Proceedings blur these lines as a matter of course. Not only were the discussions the Proceedings claim passively to record actively shaped by the appeal of having one’s words recorded for the ages, but these volumes were probably never widely read. The NCCC’s monumental aims notwithstanding, that is, the Proceedings in all likelihood did little more in the real world than take up shelf space in public libraries and private archives next to similar publications from countless other organizations. Indeed, shelf life is an apt metaphor
for the overlapping temporalities of the monument and the document at
stake in the Proceedings. On the one hand, these volumes appear to illus-
trate how conversations that seem pressing and immediately relevant in the
moment become outdated ephemera as soon as they are filed away. On the
other hand, however, they also suggest that such transformations are never
complete. Indeed, the Proceedings pursue the work of institution building by
holding the competing claims of intercession and preservation in productive
tension. See Guillory, “Monuments and Documents.”

Stenographers were available to record extemporaneous talks, but speakers
were invited to edit these documents as well.

Many of these transcripts were printed with apologetic caveats, as if to pre-
empt complaints. Stenographers no doubt also had their complaints about
the speakers whose speeches they were tasked with transcribing. As one
stenographer observes of his work at “scientific and professional meetings,”
the speakers “do not take the same amount of care in preparing their addresses
that they used to do” and frequently forget “that a mere flow of words will

The voice of the writer who played perhaps the greatest role in crafting the
Proceedings, moreover, is nowhere to be heard. An accomplished activist, es-
sayist, and physician, Isabelle C. Barrows served as conference stenographer
and editor for more than a decade but finds only brief acknowledgment in
polite asides here and there. Almost certainly by design, this omission was
probably intended to preserve the appearance of institutional authorship.

Barrows, preface.


Barrows, “Minutes and Discussions, Seventh Session,” 366–67. These senti-
ments were echoed the next year by the director of a juvenile reformatory
who called on his colleagues to “quit turning our institutions into money-
making machines. The object of all our labor should be instructive, not
productive.” Barrows, “Discussion on Industrial Training,” 381.

Cable, “The Convict Lease System in the Southern States,” 266. Prison
reformer Eugene Smith took a similar position, arguing that inmate labor
could only be called toil when isolated from the market. Ensuring that didn’t
happen was easy enough: rather than providing for inmates’ material needs
and recouping these costs through coerced labor, administrators should
charge inmates directly for everything they received, from meals to uniforms
and medical care. Only by “impos[ing] on him the necessity of working for
his living,” Smith asserted, could the prisoner be placed “on precisely the
same footing as that occupied by every working man in a free society.” Smith,
“Labor as a Means of Reformation,” 268. No one represented the fantasy of
reconciling profitable and educational labor more prominently than Zebulon
Brockway, warden of the New York State Reformatory at Elmira. Though Brockway himself rarely spoke at the conference, his success at Elmira was a touchstone in all but four volumes of the *Proceedings* between 1875 and 1914. Aside from brief mention of Brockway’s piece-price system or support for indeterminate sentencing, however, these references were usually superficial. Indeed, *Elmira* soon became a rhetorical shibboleth; instead of clarifying the intellectual project of charity and corrections, it served only to strengthen consensus. Like the fantasy that profitable institutional labor might also be educational, *Elmira* named a foregone conclusion masquerading as a site of inquiry.

The “disappearance” of Native Americans, Sanborn suggested, from what was “practically an unoccupied continent,” cleared the way for the march of American progress. Slavery and its aftermath, by contrast, posed a far more intractable problem—how to “hasten the advancement of a savage race towards civilization.” Sanborn, “Education of the African Race,” 172. The answer, Sanborn offered, was to let evolution run its course. In light of mistakes and missteps made during Reconstruction, the conference should adopt a gradualist approach and ensure that any effort made to inculcate the work ethic proper to productive citizenship among Black Americans did not rush the larger processes already in motion. The conference could only help in the most modest of ways to facilitate these developments. According to Sanborn’s civilizationist argument, lynching and anti-Black violence were likewise part of the process and should be tolerated as but temporary aberrations. “It is in the providence of God,” Sanborn observed, “to carry forward the education and elevation of the whole human race by broad methods; and a broad movement, like the tide of the ocean, pays no particular regard to the eddies and ebbs here and there” (172). A third speaker in this session, “African and Indian Races,” took an altogether different tack, endeavoring to disentangle the “humanitarian” or “benevolent” arguments offered by the likes of Sanborn and Armstrong from the “utilitarian” purposes these arguments served. Philip C. Garrett made no effort to give either the humanitarian or utilitarian angle priority. His own approach to the “tutelary debt” owed “the Africans whom we dragged in chains and slavery from their native land” was rather “both and.” Garrett sought to underscore how industrial training was at once spiritually uplifting for African Americans and economically advantageous to everyone involved. In explaining the benevolent point of view, Garrett suggests that it is enough to recall that “every son of Adam is interested in a humane treatment of all other sons of Adam.” Such humane treatment, however, involves not only good intentions but also, and perhaps even more importantly, a level economic playing field on which Black Americans would have “an equal chance and perfect opportunity to prove their fitness to compete with Caucasians.” If, after the competition had been allowed to run its course, Black Americans had become “hewers of wood
and drawers of water” in disproportionate numbers, Garrett would concede the matter settled. “Our skirts will at least be clear,” he wrote. The utilitarian perspective, on the other hand, was less concerned with assuaging white guilt than with reaping the benefits thus won. “It cannot be other than the interest of the country,” Garrett went on, “to make them self-dependent, to educate them, to elevate them, and to place them on as high a plane as they can be made to attain. As serfs or hostiles, they are a constant burden; as respectable citizens, an accession to the power and producing capacity of the country.” Garrett, “Our Duty to the African and Indian Races,” 164, 165–66.


34 Acknowledging that not all work is transformative and, by extension, that Black industrial education was often little more than drudge work, Benson made his case for educating young Black people in the liberal arts tradition and preparing them for both university studies and the professions. Nor did Washington miss the subtle criticism that Kowaliga’s curriculum represented. An early booster of Benson’s, Washington later pulled his support and encouraged others to do the same. The number of African Americans invited to speak before the conference remained small for the greater part of the organization’s early years. World War I was something of a watershed, as the lauded contributions of Black soldiers abroad gave what James Weldon Johnson called “the changing status of Negro labor” pride of place on the domestic reform agenda. Fiery papers at the conference by Johnson (1918), Robert Moton of Tuskegee (1917), and Richard R. Wright Jr. of the Christian Recorder (1919) drew a bright line between pre- and postwar-era ideas about racial uplift. “Once it was popular,” Johnson observed, “to discuss theoretically whether the Negro is capable of advancement. The very shifting of the ground of controversy concerning the race renders any such discussion obsolete.” Johnson, “The Changing Status of Negro Labor,” 383. For Wright Jr., the answer to the question on the lips of white reformers of the day—“what does the Negro want?”—was simple enough: “The Negro wants a democracy not a ‘whiteocracy.’” Wright, “What Does the Negro Want in Our Democracy?,” 539.

35 His main instructors were Wagner, Schmoller, Wilhelm Steida, and Bücher, but he also studied the works of Roscher and Albert Schäffle and in private wrote of the latter as his principal teacher. Schäfer, American Progressives and German Social Reform, 164.

36 “Charles Richmond Henderson,” 1915, box 7, folder 3, Charles Richmond Henderson Papers, University of Chicago Special Collections. Across this sizable body of work, Henderson was guided by a deep religious faith. Henderson believed that “God has providentially wrought for us the social sciences and placed them at our disposal” in order “to assist us in the difficult
task of adjustment to new situations.” Quoted in Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology*, 35. Students and more secular colleagues grew to find Henderson’s moralism unsettling, if not antithetical to objective or properly scientific social research. A similar indifference characterizes most departmental histories of sociology at Chicago, which tend to treat Henderson as a joke of sorts—“pious, ministerial, boring, and a poor substitute for Jane Addams.” Turner, “A Life in the First Half-Century of Sociology,” 120. Nonetheless, Henderson was the best-known and most published member of the Chicago faculty for many years. Both his standing in the reform world and status as a minister, moreover, allowed Henderson the sociologist to voice opinions and make recommendations that might otherwise have been dismissed as radical. Turner, “A Life in the First Half-Century of Sociology,” 120–21. Turner concludes, in fact, that “Chicago sociology, in short, needed Henderson far more than he needed Chicago sociology” (121).

37 Henderson, *Introduction to the Study of the Dependent, Defective, and Delinquent Classes*, 78. Work was the best—if not also the only—means of rehabilitating the deviant individual. This perspective is evident in early studies like Henderson’s *Social Elements: Institutions, Characters, Progress* (1898) that move seamlessly between social science and the social gospel. In a chapter titled “Social Misery, Pauperism, and Crime,” Henderson lays out in impressionistic language the worldview that later publications would supplement with quantitative and comparative statistical research. His point is simple: anyone who does not heed the imperative to work must be brought back into the fold by one means or another. While it is a well-established fact, Henderson notes, that industrial development has helped “the great majority of the population to gain an increasing share in advancing civilization,” there is also “a large class, composed of many elements, which appear to hang like a millstone about the neck of society—miserable, dangerous, parasitic.” Henderson, *Social Elements*, 209. These “social dependents” are a mixed lot. But whether one targets “tramps, thieves, beggars, robbers, parasites, gamblers, the idle rich, and all the drones” or “the imbecile, the feeble, and the untrained,” work remains the only feasible solution (116, 210). Those who are able but choose not to compete on equal footing with other “citizens in industry” should be forced to do so. Those who cannot are to be placed in institutions that can fit them for the occupations to which they are best suited or, as necessary, simply keep them busy. In this regard, Henderson shared the confidence common among his conference peers. “Thousands of persons can work well enough under command,” he noted, “who cannot find work in a competitive market” (225). It is the role of sociologists and social welfare organizations to help these latter to become as productive as possible.

38 Henderson, “Introduction,” ix. Each of the essays in *Outdoor Labor for Convicts*, first given before the International Prison Congress in 1905, arrives at the same conclusion. In order to be “as lucrative to the state as possible”
while also preparing “the convict for a rational and useful career in freedom,” wardens should contract convicts to work beyond the prison walls, preferably “in the open air.” The mode of labor almost uniformly advocated by Henderson’s panel is agricultural work, and Outdoor Labor for Convicts reads as a catalog of successful experiments in this vein. Perhaps the clearest point of reference for American readers, the convict lease system in the Southern states, was for Henderson and his colleagues merely the exception that proved the rule. Such was the message of Frederick H. Wines’s contribution to Outdoor Labor for Convicts, a portrait of Louisiana prison labor that serves as an ambivalent coda to the otherwise upbeat and self-congratulatory volume. From hard labor on the parish road crew to the drudgery of clearing “heavily timbered swamp[s]” in the state farm prison, the labor demanded of these largely African American prisoners was purely exploitative. As Wines observes, “except insofar as it involves compulsory labor, regularity of life, and discipline, it is not reformatory.” Wines, “Farm Prisons of Louisiana,” 152.

But nor is Wines’s report—much less the other moments of skepticism that flicker throughout Outdoor Labor for Convicts—grounds for rethinking the consensus that provides the volume’s point of departure and its conclusion, the notion that work is necessarily rehabilitative.


It was thus that Henderson reconciled the rehabilitationist imperative of charity and correction with a commitment to eugenics. As he counseled the delegates gathered in Cincinnati, “education and selection” should become the conference mantra. On the one hand, every effort should be made to train the “dependent members of society” to participate in an ever-progressing industrial society. But on the other, the conference should also isolate and eliminate “the depressing influence and the propagation of those who cannot be fitted for competitive life.” Extermination was too harsh a word, Henderson suggested, to account for the benevolent ends served by sequestering the unfit and preventing them from having offspring. Nor were the lives they led in seclusion to be unproductive in any absolute sense. Rather, custodial institutions were to become spaces of reformatory and uplifting work—work that would not, of course, ever sufficiently prepare or qualify clients to take up their place in industrial society. The work they performed would instead simply be make-work. Henderson, “The Relation of Philanthropy to Social Order and Progress,” 14.


See Wagner-Hasel, Die Arbeit des Gelehrten.

Bücher, Arbeit und Rhythmus, 6th ed., 17. All translations from Arbeit und Rhythmus are my own.

45 Bücher, *Industrial Evolution*, 82.


51 Lipschutz and Rasmussen, “Samori Toure.” Samory Touré and Alamany Samore Lafiya Toure, was the founder and leader of the Wassoulou Empire and among the most effective native challengers to the French.

52 See Korczynski, Pickering, and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*.

53 See Paul, “Cultural Mobility between Boston and Berlin.”


57 A similar emphasis on how the work song becomes an instrument of discipline is at stake in the transcriptions and commentaries by two African American informants, G. W. Henderson and Richard C. Harrison. The latter, readers learn, performed regularly as a folk singer in Chicago, which is presumably where Henderson met him. G. W. Henderson may well have been George Washington Henderson, a former slave who graduated from Yale and studied at the University of Berlin, as had Charles Richmond Henderson. Rather than adding a differently nuanced understanding of the traditional work song, however, almost certainly the point Bücher hoped to make in stressing that these two men were African American was that Harrison and Henderson brought the disciplinary function of the work song even more spectacularly to the fore. One of the songs they contributed to *Arbeit und Rhythmus* was performed by a group of roustabouts on the Mississippi River. In their commentary, Harrison and Henderson focus on the division of labor that the musical performance creates. Freed from physical labor, the leader “directs the work of the entire crew” according to the beat of his own song. Others join in the refrain to maintain an even pace at their own tasks. But much as his song keeps the others in line, the leader is also an overseer, carrying with him a stick with which to strike the “slow and lazy fellows.” Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, 6th ed., 259. As such, the leader’s role literalizes the disciplinary force attributed to the African American work song. In the reformist context from which these transcriptions originated, moreover, the
leader’s role also blurs the conference’s tenuous distinction between rehabilitative labor and labor that was merely profitable.


60 On MacLean, see Deegan, *Annie Marion MacLean and the Chicago School of Sociology*.

61 “A semi-romantic interest is often attached by those away in the distance to the girl who guides a machine or banter her comrades the while,” MacLean noted in a 1910 collection of ethnographic sketches. “When the truth is known, she leads a very unromantic life, full of grim realities which she meets often enough with heroism.” MacLean, *Wage-Earning Women*, 1–2. In *Women Workers and Society* (1916), MacLean bemoans the strict division between work and leisure industrial labor demanded. If not nostalgic for the cult of domesticity, MacLean does regret the loss of the kind of sociality created when women worked at home. “When industry was carried on in the home,” she notes, “it was social. There was always time for chatter and laughter while work was in process; but not so in our modern era, where, ordinarily, in the up-to-date factory, there are stringent regulations against the chatter and laughter that help to make youth pleasant.” There can be no doubt, MacLean concedes, that the prohibition of “chatter and laughter” along with song in the factory is reasonable enough. But still she asks “that a little interest be injected into the long day of arduous toil.” Many employers, MacLean continues, “are doing what they can to extend educational or recreational features for this very purpose. And if we can only wait long enough, we shall probably see a much more complete socialization.” Although MacLean does not herself make the connection, the collegiality and support she anticipates with the coming of corporate “welfare work” resembles the sociality created by the washerwomen whose songs she transcribed for *Arbeit und Rhythmus*. MacLean, *Women Workers and Society*, 116; Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, 6th ed., 243.

62 In “A Town in Florida,” MacLean recounted in deliberate, pedestrian prose the history and future prospects of three Black churches in Deland, Florida. In a later essay titled “Where the Color Lines Are Drawn,” on the other hand, MacLean turned to the lives of Black migrants in the North. Her analysis shares much with her understanding of the problems facing white working women but also with her earlier commentary on Black work songs in *Arbeit und Rhythmus*. Of the difficulties of “industrial adjustment” encountered by Black migrants, for instance, MacLean writes:

> Besides this, the difference between plantation labor in the South and industrialism in the North was too great for the negro to compass in a short time. ‘Dat time clock sho’ give me a shell shock,’ said Tom Jamison, called Jimmison for short, as he came reeling out of a button factory.
Being a man with a hoe was more to his liking, for a hoe is a prop to the warly, and dinner time is the only time heeded where he came from. To tend a machine that cut buttons from bone looked like silly work to Tom when he started, but he soon felt himself a prisoner with all the restrictions placed upon him. No song, no merry laughter as he toiled, only the roar of the machines. (MacLean, *Our Neighbors*, 102)

As in her discussion of work songs in Bücher’s volume, the juxtaposition that MacLean draws here between rural Black labor in the South and “industrialism in the North” turns on the question of rhythm. MacLean’s ethnographic subject, Tom Jamison, experiences the chiming of the bell that standardizes industrial time not as a benign click-track but as a source of psychological injury. It paces his day according to a rhythm of production all but divorced from the rhythms of his body. Nor does singing itself offer a viable means of reorganizing his days; the “roar of the machines” makes it impossible to hear his own voice or to share with his coworkers a moment of “merry laughter.” In place of the machine, Jamison finds himself longing for a hoe, an implement he values less for the kind of work one might do with it than for how it conjoins work and leisure. A hoe, he observes, is both a tool and a “prop”; but it is also a time-keeping device that allows the possessor to establish the pace and the variety of their working day.

65 In early autobiographies such as the pseudonymously published *Cheero* (1918), MacLean takes on the medical establishment’s commitment to reducing people with disabilities to their disabilities. “The queerest thing about wheel-chair residence,” MacLean notes, “is the mental attitude of non-residents toward the occupant. They look on him indulgently as on a child, but they do not really take him seriously.” MacLean, *Cheero*, 50. MacLean’s protagonist Jane moved from one hospital to the next sanitarium and received any number of treatments and devices. Once back home, Jane became a prominent “wheel-chair academic” on returning to public speaking after a long absence: “Once Jane went forth to a public banquet where twelve hundred working-women sat down to celebrate. She thought then that the mere fact that they were able to work was worth celebrating. That was the reason she promised to lift up her voice in public once more. She had had a long vacation from after-dinner speaking and was anxious to know if she could prattle acceptably. But she never knew because the morning papers devoted their space to her crutches! ‘Invalid Heroine of Banquet,’ they said. ‘Women who had not walked for years got out of bed to attend. Carried on shoulders of girls!’” (50). Less travesty than farce, the scene that MacLean describes is one of misdirected or mistaken praise. Whereas Jane feels that the everyday lives of the twelve hundred women assembled at the banquet
deserve celebration, those women and the media believe that the simple fact of her appearance is the larger accomplishment. Indeed, the everyday achievements that brought each of these women to the table—“the mere fact that they were able to work”—is precisely the kind of ordinariness to which Jane aspires. Her return to the after-dinner circuit is motivated, we learn, by a desire less to achieve the rhetorical heights than to “prattle acceptably.” And if it was her body that initially removed Jane from carrying on the everyday work that had once occupied her days, her body now prevents her from rejoining the workaday world. The curiosity and near-prurient attention she garners would seem to promise anything but the resumption of business as usual.

66 MacLean, “Twenty Years of Sociology by Correspondence,” 464–65.
67 MacLean, “Twenty Years of Sociology by Correspondence,” 468.
68 MacLean, “Twenty Years of Sociology by Correspondence,” 471–72.
69 MacLean, “This Way Lies Happiness,” 24.
70 MacLean, “This Way Lies Happiness,” 24.
71 See MacLean, “This Way Lies Happiness”:

Even though one is shut within four walls there are people all about; they come on the printed page, and fill up the lonely places. One can keep a suffering body under by listening to the friends in books. All the enthusiasms of life are there. There is interest, too, in the people who pass. They go their more or less mysterious ways, and I am off in interested speculation. Freed from the emotions born of competitive life, child-like, I look upon all people as my friends. And the cultivation of friends is, I believe, the main business of Life. It is the extension of the friendly spirit alone that can save the world from greed. And in this the physically handicapped can participate.… Through friends, I keep grip on the great world. I participate through them in its joys and sorrows. Through friends my horizon widens. And I feared when I was stricken that it would narrow to intellectual suffocation. Stereotyped forms of happiness have us in their grip till some cataclysm gives us a glimpse of new patterns. By an exercise of will beauty can be read into new combinations. (27–28)

73 Jackson, foreword, vii.
74 Blackburn, “State Programs of Public Welfare in the South,” 6. Outdoor relief and the poorhouse, two mainstays of charities and corrections, were of particular concern. As sociologist Robert W. Kelso noted, the “chain of ideation” set in motion by the former was far from positive: “a dreary room with grimy windows; a railing worn smooth by the supplicating caresses of many palms; a bench and upon it a row of figures, some stooped with age and the miseries of life; … some children, thin and old before their time—these the
beggars of the public bounty, ready to avow their poverty and accept their certificate of pauperization in the form of an order on the village store.” The poorhouse was no better: “a barn-like room where the aged sit and rock away the hours, while children go in and out among them, grinning and making sport of the senile or scampering out of reach of the cross old lady with the dusting cap who mutters to herself and will shake folks if they bother her.” Kelso, “Recent Advances in the Administration of Poor Relief,” 90.

75 As one contributor to the institute’s house journal Social Forces noted, social work “was not in general use at the opening of the present century. Two or three decades ago, such terms as philanthropy, charity, correction, outdoor relief, care of dependents, defectives, and delinquents were commonly employed by those at work in these fields.” Steiner, Education for Social Work, 1.

76 Odum, An Approach to Public Welfare and Social Work, 7. These various “disadvantaged folks,” Odum concluded, were “lost, misplaced, misfits in the game of life.” Nonetheless, for all but the most “aged and infirm,” productive labor was the crux of any solution modern social work might offer. The same was true for prisoners, for whose rehabilitation society was also responsible. As Odum saw matters, social workers should endeavor to make institutions more or less self-sustaining; to help prisoners support their families; and to institute “educational and corrective measures, including vocational guidance and direction, and physical rejuvenation” (153). These were largely the same goals, of course, with which previous generations of reformers had sought to reshape the public institutions of social welfare in the image of redemptive labor. Like earlier reformers, moreover, Odum and his colleagues were drawn in particular to the Southern peculiarity of the chain gang. To be sure, the abuse of the convict lease system was widely recognized when the Institute for Social Research was founded in 1920. Nor would the conclusions that Odum drew in studies like An Approach to Public Welfare and Social Work or Systems of Public Welfare have been considered altogether surprising. Odum’s primary concern was that prisoners be granted sanitary working conditions and proper medical treatment. He also argued that the practice of leasing convicts to private concerns should be replaced with a well-coordinated plan for employing prisoners on county and state projects, an argument that Charles Richmond Henderson had made thirty years earlier. Odum, An Approach to Public Welfare and Social Work, 155.

But if Odum paid greater attention to the capricious violence of the lease in these works than in The Negro and His Songs, all of these books toe what emerged as the institute line—an unwillingness to demand the abolition of existing practices in favor of returning the convict lease system to its rehabilitationist roots. This consensus finds fullest articulation in The North Carolina Chain Gang: A Study of County Convict Road Work (1927) by Jesse Steiner and Roy Brown. The authors begin by acknowledging that convict labor, far from
redemptive, was most often plain and simple drudgery. The “average county official” in charge of a road gang—the most common use of convict labor in North Carolina—had little regard for any “corrective or reformatory value in such methods of penal treatment.” Steiner and Brown, *The North Carolina Chain Gang*, 6. The conclusion to be drawn is bleak: “The idea of reformation was far in the background and still apparently is not thought of as one of the purposes of this method of penal treatment. No one expects the prisoners to leave the chain gang improved in character or better prepared for citizenship” (174).

79 Odum, “Religious Folk-Songs of the Southern Negroes,” 265. As such, attending to Black religious expression is a potent resource with which to address the “problem of the relations between the whites and blacks.” As Odum writes further:

Social conditions are changing and it is of paramount importance that every step taken shall be well founded and in the right direction. The political, social, and economical position of the negro, his education, his religion, his tendencies—these are themes that demand definite and accurate comprehension above all else. Truths have too often been assumed. Passion and prejudice have often hindered the attainment of noble ends which were earnestly sought. A true knowledge of actual conditions, if properly set forth, must convince the sincere observer as to the proper relation which should exist between the two races. Nothing else should do it, nothing else can do it. And any evidences that will assist in fixing the real status of the negro should be welcomed by both the whites and the blacks; progress may then be encouraged from the proper stand point. (267)

81 Odum, “Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes (Concluded),” 379.
82 Odum, “Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes (Concluded),” 378.
83 Odum, “Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes (Concluded),” 378.
84 Odum, “Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes (Concluded),” 393.
85 Odum and Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, 265.
86 Odum, “Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes (Concluded),” 391. As such, “any popular song may be adapted to become a work song. Themes are freely mingled; verses, disjointed and inconsequential, are sung to many tunes and variations.” Odum,
“Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes,” 268.

87 Metfessel, *Phonophotography in Folk Music*, 22. As Brenton J. Malin notes, phonophotography was at root “an enhanced version of [Seashore’s voice] tonoscope,” a device Seashore used as early as 1902 to create a graphic representation of the sound waves produced by vocal performances. Malin, *Feeling Mediated*, 117.

88 Hochman, *Savage Preservation*, 77, 99–100. Indeed, Metfessel’s renderings of African American folk songs visually resemble the transcriptions of Hopi songs that Gilman published two and a half decades earlier using his own “phonographic” method. Gilman’s method was essentially to compare each note of phonographic recording with the notes of a finely graduated harmonium in order to establish the pitch as exactly as possible: “This comparison always had one or other of two results: either there was one harmonium note which at once impressed me as the nearest, or what struck me was the divergence of the note of the song from any harmonium note, even the one which finally appeared nearer the others.” Gilman, *Hopi Songs*, 53. As described below, Metfessel’s method, adapted from Seashore, followed much the same tack, though he compared measurements of luminosity. Metfessel’s method was indebted perhaps most of all to his mentor at the University of Iowa, the psychologist Carl Seashore, who specialized in audiology and the psychology of the arts. Seashore claimed that the inspiration for phonophotography first came when a Smithsonian specialist in Native American music visited his lab “to have her ears certified with reference to the degree of reliability for the transcribing of phonograph records.” Instead of using his audiology equipment to certify a given researcher’s capacity for objective analysis, Seashore soon realized, he could use that same equipment to transcribe musical performances directly—essentially sidestepping the fallibility of even the best-trained human ears with the technical objectivity of phonophotography. Seashore, “Phonophotography in the Measurement of the Expression of Emotion,” 471.

89 Johnson, preface, 30; quoted in Metfessel, *Phonophotography in Folk Music*, 21. If “the charm and distinctiveness of the singing of Negroes lies in [the] queer pranks of their voices,” Metfessel argued, the “twists and turns [that] occur too quickly” for the human ear could easily be captured using the phonographic method. Metfessel, *Phonophotography in Folk Music*, 20. In addition to preserving, collecting, and analyzing folk music, as Steve J. Wurtzler notes, Seashore and his acolytes also believed phonophotography allowed researchers to analyze the expression of emotion in music and to quantify aesthetic value. Wurtzler, *Electric Sounds*, 236. As Seashore wrote, “There is no character of music, no musical change, or meaning, or expression of emotion, or art, or skill, manifested in music that is not represented physically and math-
ematically in the sound wave; and in terms of these waves we can describe (within the limits of instrumental errors) every character of music, from the crudest efforts to the most refined exhibition of esthetic emotion.” Seashore, “Three New Approaches to the Study of Negro Music,” 191.


91 Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, 257.

92 Metfessel’s interest in measuring innate musical ability bears the influence of both his mentor, Carl Seashore, and Odum’s collaborator Guy Benton Johnson. The latter’s doctoral research at UNC involved administering the so-called Seashore test to over 3,500 Black students to assess “the musical talent of the American Negro.” Johnson, “A Study of the Musical Talent of the American Negro.”


95 Metfessel, *Phonophotography in Folk Music*, 96.

96 Sanders, *Howard W. Odum’s Folklore Odyssey*, 127.


101 Quoted in Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands*, 156.


106 Another omission on Du Bois’s part is equally telling. On Edisto Island, evidently grieved to hear the dissenting freed men and women object to his proclamation “in such an unchristian spirit,” General Howard provided one final justification for their dispossession. “He himself professed to be a follower of Christ,” another eyewitness recalled, “who taught us to forgive our enemies and said that he had been in twenty-two battles, had lost his arm, and been severely wounded many times; he was willing to suffer more, if necessary, and yet he forgave them, from the bottom of his heart.” *Liberator*, “Gen. Howard, at Edisto Island,” 198. Unable to convince the freed men and women to accept that their labor would never be redemptive on terms of their choosing, Howard flips the script. No longer a sign of rehabilitative potential, disability is once again a marker of white sacrifice and ultimately of white prerogative. Soldiers under Howard’s command roundly praised
the bravery with which the amputee general fought, his missing arm clearly becoming a sign of martial value. Writes cavalryman John L. Collins, for instance, “He was in the middle of the road and mounted, his maimed arm embracing a stand of colors that some regiment had deserted, while with his sound arm he was gesticulating to the men to make a stand by their flag. With a bared head he was pleading with his soldiers, literally weeping as he entreated the unheeding horde…. Maimed in person and sublime in his patriotism, he seemed worthy to stand by, and out of pure compliment to his appearance I hooked up my saber and fell in the line that gathered about him.” Quoted in Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, 3:45.

Coda

1 Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy.
2 Zacka, When the State Meets the Street, 10–11.
4 King, Where Do We Go from Here, 172.
5 Benner, “Building a Real Sharing Economy.”
8 Kabir, Raisa Kabir.