Let Greil Marcus Call This Revisionist—

for Nelson George

"Critics often write about non-white cultures as though their only reason for existence is to influence American-European artists....Rock and roll is important because it inspired Mick Jagger..."—

Ishmael Reed, "300 Years Of 1984"

Once again, try to accept pop culture as my own,

the unavoidable field, the only glue left, the thread

without which America's fragile,

tenuous,

sense of national "unity" would shatter.

Why, then, do they push such divisiveness?

Or, look at everything and ask...

Is that human culture, or is it white culture?

Let's go back.....

I hear the electric acoustic alliance!

The combo of electric bass and acoustic horns

allows me to hear the indoors and the outdoors meet.

Less people locked their doors back then

so you could hear the air

—the breath in the horns—

dancing with the pulse of Generals Electric and Motors....

as black folks bought their small town vibe

to the alienating northern white metropolis....

In the dominant historical myth of technological progress,

electric bass represented the new

and acoustic horns represented the old.

Generals Electric and Motors sent bass

down to the slave quarters to take away their horns,

but they started getting along too well,

best buddies for at least 30 years

on a two-way street between young and old (ah!)

If you listened closely

you could even hear labor and business

making love despite themselves

and it wasn't just rape

back when people heard "45"

and felt a dance groove more than a beer

or a gun named "Colt"

as if to find portals

to a more democratic culture

the space between horns and bass

wider than any between heaven and hell

to help create an American culture

that could liberate Europeans

from their implicit & explicit

Nazi Music Regulations banning music "too jewish & gloomy" as well as "negroid excesses in rhythm"...

but just as blacks made advances the corporations pushed for the divisive notion of youth culture to help crush the musical miscegenation of mid-century America (white kids can "act more black" in their teens, but by their 30s we'll rope them back in with light rock)

Do you think it was an accident that the AM radio dial went from music to talk not long after the corporations bought it? that music became less melodic and less rhythmic? Ask just about anybody who loves music who was alive during that period and most will tell you—regardless of the kind of music they like that America was much more musical then

And I know they're not lying but the media puts up a wall between their truth and their grandkids and I stood as a brick in that wall trying to be a hole through which they embrace and not the middleman trying to coopt them in a racist system in fusion and its con (Baraka) and in such schlock as "Ebony And Ivory" which almost as many whites hated as blacks did and some kind of job-stealing Rachel Dolemite.

Yet once I listen to what the black stations were playing in the 50s, 60s & even 70s that wasn't being played on the white stations alongside of what the black stations were playing that was being played on the whiter stations.... it's hard not to see the history of English speaking pop music as the history of whites misinterpreting the lessons R&B was teaching them

on the casting couch

you get to play the corrupt

or clueless, manager

you get to play the horse

I mean Solomon Burke asking Jerry Wexler

to "unleash some funds" so that the profits from their soul super group could bring franchise businesses,

jobs and scholarships

to communities in peril

of abandonment and extinction

that was their fan base.

In the next scene we see Wexler snap into action in response to the Soul Clan's demands and sign Led Zeppelin, Yes, and CSN&Y

jumping the shark ship

away from the R&B that made him to the kind of album covers that open up so white folks can roll joints in

and we're told Otis has died.

Then Frank tells me how much he loved Joe Cocker & I hear the shock and awe of bombast & I remember Cos joked that Ray Charles couldn't get paid as much since Joe started doing it but the more tragic joke was that Cocker wasn't really doing it and Belushi could parody him and that freed him to do Blues Butlers minstrelsy trying to be ironic and self-conscious to turn people to the source more than Joe did.

Ackroyd makes millions selling his serious blues pedagogy. It worked for my ex, but Cocker was arena, more Hollywood than TV larger than life, proto Eddie Vedder. yeah, I can still dig "Cry Me A River" but his "With A Little Help From My Friends" ain't got nothing on Aretha's "Eleanor Rigby" a portal into gospel whites understand even less than the blues but hey she's got Dwayne Allman early Dwayne of course reined in, too collective gotta get away, move over and let me dance

not knowing you're being used to drip with the elitist political purpose

of 70s excess, like a supernova boom wrecking ball for community school store as Star Wars seems quaint and primitive today & so I began to understand in my visceral soul and bones white dilution as the deeper crime than steal one and the same, one and the same.

So yes Ray did it better than Joe & David Ruffin & Eddie Kendricks did it better than Mick Jagger or The Rare Earth (& the less said about James Taylor, the better)

& this was a door backward into something like before 1619, black to the future while I searched for original versions of "Time Is On My Side" and "Have Mercy, Baby" Made in America, dammit! (of course Trump plays the Stones; so much for "make America great again")

and it's understandable some feel lied to when the desegregated schools they fought & died for taught history from an exclusively white perspective

and it's an interesting coincidence that horns fell out of fashion as the wealth gap increased, that horns went down (or out) as Reaganomics rose (and General Electric was more in than ever).

Chris Stroffolino