

Resounding History: A Rhetoric of Sonic Historiography (in Two Parts)

by Jonathan W. Stone

Part 2: Work, Play, and Worship: Vera Hall's Vernacular Rhetorical Voice

Note: This audio essay contains 1940s-era archival material. Its primary subject, Vera Hall, occasionally uses a racial slur in her descriptions and remembrances.

Work, Play, and Worship: Vera Hall's Vernacular Rhetorical Voice: Transcript

[Moby's (1999) "Natural Blues" from *Play* plays in the background. "Natural Blues" includes a repeating sample of Vera Hall's alto singing, which then fades together with a club-style drum beat.]

"Oh Lordy, trouble so hard. Oh Lordy, now, trouble so hard. Don't nobody know my troubles but God. Don't nobody know my troubles but God. Oh Lordy, trouble so hard. Oh Lordy, now, trouble so hard. Don't nobody know my troubles but God. Don't nobody know my troubles but God."

Stone: So goes the refrain in Moby's 1999 hit "Natural Blues" off of his platinum record *Play*. *Play* was an anomaly—a critically acclaimed, multimillion-unit-selling dance/trance record written and produced by a relatively unknown New York DJ and musician, Richard Melville Hall. "Moby" is Hall's stage name—a nickname that referenced the white whale of his distant ancestor, Herman Melville. Casual listeners to "Natural Blues" may have been surprised to discover that Moby was neither the African American woman featured prominently on the track nor a reference to the literary white whale, but instead a *white male* from New York's underground electronic music scene. More savvy listeners would notice that the "trouble so hard" refrain was repeating in identical loops and was, in fact, a sample—a piece of tape extracted from a primary source and then mixed (or remixed) into a new composition.

The person singing on the sample is Vera Ward Hall, who lived from 1902 to 1964. Hall was an Alabama-born woman who was relatively unknown outside of her home community and over thirty years dead by the time Moby's song was released to wide acclaim. Vera Hall was first recorded singing the song in 1937 by John Lomax and Ruby Pickens Tartt during a field recording trip across

This is a transcript of Jonathan W. Stone's audio essay "Work, Play, and Worship: Vera Hall's Vernacular Rhetorical Voice" from his chapter "Resounding History: A Rhetoric of Sonic Historiography (in Two Parts)," published in *Tuning in to Soundwriting* (eds. Stedman, Danforth, & Faris, enculturation/Intermezzo, 2021, <http://intermezzo.enculturation.net/14-stedman-et-al.htm>).

the rural South. Tartt, who was working as chair of the Sumter County Works Progress Administration, was an expert in the region's folk culture, and when Tartt and Lomax teamed up to record the best of that region's folk singers, she introduced him to Hall, whom she had known since childhood. On that occasion, July 22, 1937, Lomax and Tartt recorded Hall singing "Trouble So Hard" with her cousins Dock and Henry Reed. This recording, which lacks the fidelity of the later solo recording Moby sampled, so impressed John Lomax that it would be one of several songs he would ask her to repeat in later meetings. Indeed, Hall became a regular if not frequent collaborator with both John Lomax and his son Alan over the next 30 years. Here is a sample from that 1937 recording of "Trouble So Hard" with Hall and the Reed cousins.

Timestamp: 02:10 | Source: Reed, Reed, & Hall (1937/1942), "Trouble So Hard"

["Trouble So Hard," performed by Dock Reed, Henry Reed, and Vera Hall (1937/1942). This recording is more grainy than the voice on the Moby sample. It begins with one of the Reed cousins singing in a low baritone. Hall and the other Reed join the singing in a call-and-response-style singing structure.]

Oh Lord, trouble so hard
Oh Lord, trouble so hard
Yes, indeed, my troubles are hard
Yes, indeed, my troubles are hard

Oh Lord, trouble so hard
Oh Lord, trouble so hard
Don't nobody know my troubles but God
Don't nobody know my troubles but God
Yes, indeed, my troubles so hard
Yes, indeed, my troubles so hard

Oh Lord, trouble so hard
Oh Lord, trouble so hard
Wait and let me tell you what the sister will do

[singing fades into background, continuing under next paragraph]

A different version of "Trouble So Hard" is heard on "Natural Blues." Moby got that recording from a 1993 box set titled *Sounds of the South: A Musical Journey from the Georgia Islands to the Mississippi Delta* (Lomax, 1961/1993). The box set has the version of the song sung solo by Hall and recorded by Alan Lomax in 1959 in Hall's home in Livingston, Alabama. The song itself is, of course,

much older with elements dating to at least the mid-nineteenth century (Sullivan, 2017, p. 133). Its original composer is unknown.

Here's the 1959 recording. It's easily recognizable as the version used in Moby's song.

Timestamp: 03:44 | Source: Hall (1959), "Trouble So Hard (II)"

["Trouble So Hard," performed solo by Hall (1961/1993). This recording includes Hall singing "Trouble So Hard" as it sounds on the Moby recording without Moby's additives.]

Oh Lordy, trouble so hard
Oh Lordy, now, trouble so hard
Don't nobody know my troubles but God
Don't nobody know my troubles but God
Went down the hill the other day
Soul got happy and stayed all day

[continues, faded into the background]

I rehearse these incomplete details about the origins of Hall's "Natural Blues" (of which Moby samples only 17 seconds) in order to acknowledge the received value system that undergirds most of, if not all, discussions about folksong and other traditional lore. For better and worse, origins, authenticity, and (more recently) appropriation, ownership, and ethics have been important to those who care about the collection, preservation, and representation of folk culture.¹¹

Due to its massive success, Moby's use of samples from the Lomax and other archives came under some scrutiny. Was, for example, his sample of Hall's voice from the Lomax archive used with permission? Yes.

["Natural Blues" crossfades into "Somber Heart" by Lee Rosevere (2018). "Somber Heart" is an atmospheric, quiet song. It features a beating heart as rhythm accompanied by piano and other synthesized music.]

Moby's record company purchased the right to use the short clips from "Natural Blues" and others using the system of "clearing samples," common enough in the late 1990s after more than a decade of hip-hop sampling litigation. Was the compensation adequate? Well, given the song's mass appeal, the compensation—which came before the song hit it big—was lackluster. Legal scholar David Hesmondhalgh (2006) estimates that the sample was licensed for between \$1500 and \$5000—and likely on the lower end—which would have then been distributed to several parties, only one

of which was Vera Hall's estate. There have been several lawsuits since seeking additional remuneration, and Moby has made a few good-faith actions, such as donating to the foundation that created a historical marker for Hall in Livingston, Alabama (P. Stone, n.d.).

Beyond monetary questions, however, there are other problematic circumstances associated with "Natural Blues." For example, when asked for his thoughts on the histories or cultural context of the samples used on *Play* (which are important details for scholars, of course), Moby said, quote, "I wasn't so much attracted to the traditional context. When they were recorded and the cultural tradition they reflected didn't interest me as much as the emotional qualities of the vocals on each record" (quoted in Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 64). Unquote. This admission is hard to hear in a scholarly context where even the most basic ethnographic methodology teaches a certain respect for the things that Moby readily ignores. That he even had the Lomax collection was a bit of a coincidence as well. A friend actually lent him the discs. Here, Moby recalls those circumstances in an interview with Jonathan Goldstein (2016) on his podcast *Heavyweight*:

Moby: Two of the most remarkably iconic songs on the record would never have been written or existed had I not been given those CDs. Like, I didn't know who Alan Lomax was and I—the box set called *Sounds of the South*—I didn't know it existed and I certainly—it was an expensive box set. There was no way I was going to walk into Tower Records and spend \$65 or however much it was going to be on a box set I knew nothing about, from an archivist I'd never heard of. So, like, those are 100% the result of me being given those CDs. (Goldstein, 2016)

[*"Somber Heart" fades out.*]

Stone: Given Moby's ignorance of ethnographic methods and his happenstance acquisition of *Sounds of the South*, his interest in what he hears as a kind of raw, emotional sound of Hall's voice is not surprising and is notable only because it is a typical response to voices in the archive, and especially voices of color. Moby's refashioning of "Trouble So Hard" as "Natural Blues" reflects that all-too-common fetishizing of the vocal "other" as possessing something authentic, wild, or untouched.¹²

[*Begin background music: "Among Thorns" by Hyson (2018a). "Among Thorns" is a piano-based electronic instrumental song. It features an electric guitar playing a melodic line throughout.*]

(I'm nitpicking now, but also observe that "Trouble" is not a blues at all but a spiritual—a distinction that would have mattered a lot to Hall.) I could dive deeper, but what should be clear is that Moby was not interested in doing the right thing by the musicians he samples. As he said, "I desperately aspire to making beautiful records" (quoted in Harris, 2000, p. 103). Hesmondhalgh

(2006), the legal scholar I cited earlier, calls this art-over-ethics approach, quote, "digital minstrelsy" (p. 70), unquote, and despite the fact that Moby's work introduced millions to the genius and beauty of "Trouble So Hard," I wouldn't disagree.

The most important and blaring oversight here, however, is Vera Hall herself. Beyond the carelessness of Moby, that 17-second sample of Hall's no-doubt beautiful rendering of a religious standard remains fetishized by scholars and historians when they allow themselves to be carried away by the injustice of the above-mentioned controversies. The injustice is important, yes, but there is an opportunity to re-sound and thus reconstitute Vera Hall's contributions to the musical and cultural history of the United States, and more importantly to her more immediate community: those she sung to, worked for, and worshipped with. This inversion, from the macro multiplatinum sounding of Hall's voice to the micro—its everyday, lived, practical expression—is possible because the same archive that gave Moby his infamous 17 seconds has over four hours of additional content available for listening (and even downloading) to anyone with an internet connection. Vera Hall's sonic archive provides scholars and casual listeners alike the opportunity to listen in as she reminisces about her life through story and song on tape.

The recordings also relate to us a unique archive in Hall herself. At the time of the recording, Hall's eyesight had all but failed. Had she been inclined to write her personal history down, she could no longer see well enough to do so. It is sobering to think that her story and songs would have been completely lost to us had it not been for her collaboration with Alan Lomax. Her history, then, is unique in that it could not have come to us in any other way than as a sound recording. The responsibility is now ours to carefully resound that history in its rich aural detail for an audience beyond the one that Moby provided her.

What follows, then, is just one possible rendering of that material, but one aimed at subverting Vera Hall's received legacy as the woman sampled on Moby's hit record, or as the woman recorded by John and Alan Lomax, or even as a, quote, "national treasure." None of these give Vera Hall's voice and history the amplification and reverberation that she deserves.

As the rest of this audio essay proceeds, I hope to participate *with* Hall in resounding these received histories, and in doing so, highlight the powerful sonic rhetorics that accompany her music and speech. And, to be fair, I don't necessarily dispute titles like "national treasure," nor do I condemn with a full throat the work of Moby and other musicians whose artful if careless sample use bring underrepresented voices to the masses. Surely "Natural Blues" got people talking about Vera Hall. But I also think those designations relegate Hall and other potentially powerful archival women's voices to objects—to "treasure" to be admired rather than individuals with sonic rhetorics to be studied, discussed, and theorized.

This work is meant as a foil to that traditional way of hearing history, and as such, I will present Hall speaking for herself as much as possible. Yes, my "voice" is still present in some sparse commentary as well as in the choices I make as the editor of the archival audio clips, but I have produced them and now present them in the spirit of [Jacqueline Jones] Royster (2000) and other scholars' effort to undercut decades of historiographic mis- and underrepresentation.

Listeners will notice one other voice on the recordings: that of Alan Lomax himself. I suppose I could have edited him out, but I think it's important to note his presence as interviewer and producer and hear the effect he has on the proceedings. The questions he asks are generally helpful if occasionally ignorant, and—disappointingly—he frequently refers to Hall as "honey." Lomax's seeming term of endearment now sounds patronizing and even racist—a blaring example of what sound studies scholar Jennifer Lynn Stoever (2016) calls "the sonic color line." Stoever's insights resonate through this audio essay. Her book, also called *The Sonic Color Line*, examines the history of how listening became what she calls a "racialized-body discipline" and also how white scholars such as Lomax were complicit in creating particular ways of hearing race—ways that more often than not sought to refashion Black voices or silence them altogether (p. 4). With Stoever (and using her words now) I hope to, quote, "compel readers to listen deeply to the long history of Black agency, resistance, and activism in the face of such silencing" (p. 6), unquote, with my own invitation to listen for that history in these renderings of Hall's experiences.

I also wish to remind the listener that Vera Hall was not a public figure and her rhetoric does not resonate along traditional political wavelengths. Nevertheless, Hall's singing and oral history have a rhetorical and historical relevance and power that belie typical political conventions. If we can learn to listen and hear the importance of voices like Hall's, perhaps we might also learn to recognize the rhetorical and the historical significance of other women who did not have access to (or even interest in) participating in privileged political spaces. Hall's experiences are replete with poverty, tragedy, and toil, but her stories about those experiences are related with laughter and playfulness as often as they are with solemnity or sadness. Above all, Vera Hall's rhetoric is a mixture of pragmatism and prayerfulness.

We'll begin, then, with Hall's rich description of her childhood and the experience of growing up on a rural farm in Alabama. She begins that story with a song her mother sang to her as a child, "I Got a Home in that Rock." Here is Vera Hall, recorded by Alan Lomax in his home in New York City on Hall's only trip outside of Alabama. The year is 1948.

Timestamp: 12:52 | Source: Hall (1948d), "I Got a Home in That Rock"

Hall: [*Singing. As she sings, Hall taps her foot.*]

King Jesus is that solid rock, and don't you see? Don't you see?
King Jesus is that solid rock, and don't you see? Don't you see?
Way between the heaven and earth
Think I heard my Savior say
King Jesus is that solid rock, and don't you see?

I got a home in that rock and don't you see?
I got a home in that rock and don't you see?
Way between the heaven and earth
Think I heard my Savior says
I got a home in that rock and don't you see?

**Timestamp: 13:45 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948e), "Commentary by Vera Hall
on Her Mother's Songs and Her Siblings"**

My mother used to sing that all the time—all the time! Especially when she was cooking or washing or something at home. That is one of her favorite songs.

Lomax: Did she ever tell you anything about that when you were a little girl?

Hall: Well, she says that her mother used to sing it. Aunt Bell. I used to ask her, I says, "Momma, where did you hear that? Wh—what, what is that song there?" I said, "I sure would like to learn it." She said, "Well I don't know where my people get it from. My mother used to sing it when we was little and I just still remembers it. [She] say, "I know I don't know it all but, course, it's just so old. I just sings what I know because I love it."

Lomax: What did they say about you when—what did your momma tell you about yourself when you were a little baby and a little girl. What kind of little baby did she say you were?

Hall: She said I was awfully good. Said I was mostly [*unintelligible*]*—she never did own but just three childrens. Well, she owned four—the boy, she had three girls and one boy, but the boy just died a tiny baby. And uh, she said that me—I was one of the best babies that she ever had. She could nurse me and lay me down on the bed and go out and wash a great big bundle of clothes. And she don't mind, I'd sleep and sleep. And she come back and peep at me and I still asleep. She'd go and even cook dinner. And when they was chopping in the field, she'd nurse me real good before she go to field and she could go to field and stay till 11 o'clock and I'd be—*

sometime I'd be done waked up, but I'd just be lying there on the bed playing. She said I was a real good baby and also a good child in my growing up. But I'd always stay anywhere they leave me. If they tell me to stay home and go clean to town—town was 10 miles from our home—well, I'd stay there. If she said "sit on the porch," I'd sit there. If it rained, I'd sit there. If it snowed, I'd sit there. I just stayed where she told me to stay.

Lomax: Were you the youngest, Vera?

Hall: I'm the youngest. Sure is.

Lomax: Wh—what were the names of your other brother and sisters?

Hall: Well, my little brother what died—my mother said he was named Nemias Hall. He was older than me. I'm next to him. Said he never did look just right when he's born. He had a great big head, my momma told us about him. Said when he got to sitting alone on the floor, his head was so big it just looked like it would turn him over like that, which it would pull him over. And they was so far out in the country that sh—they never had a doctor with him, but he didn't appear to be sick, he just had a great big "water head." And his body was kind of small but he was like that, she said. If you sit him down on the floor, his head would just tumble him right over. But he would eat. And he was real—had plenty life in him. And so they said that worms killed him, said worms choked him over night and killed him.

Lomax: And older than he, what was the next child in the family?

Hall: Her name was Estelle Hall.

Lomax: And how much older than you was—

Hall: Estelle is five years older than me. And Bessie, she was the very oldest one; she's seven years older than me.

Lomax: What did your folks say? Where they, were they sorry or glad that they didn't have a boy in the family?

Hall: Well, my father always wanted a boy. But Momma, I—she said that if she could have the, say, well she didn't know what was going to happen to him after he grew up anyway. Might have been foolish, or might have not had no sense, mighta not could never talk and she'da had something like that on her hands. Said the

regular Lord knowed best to just take him. So, Papa said—I heard him say a lot of time—"I wish my boy had a lived." Said, "I've got all these old gals. Course, they alright; they all my children But I just want me a boy to go to field with me and help me plow—these gals can't plow!" So, he did make a plow hand out of my oldest sister Bessie. She plow. He used the sidecar and she'd split wheels behind him. And she learned how to do it good. But Momma, she, she didn't care. I don't think she cared if *that* boy died. She said she'd like to own a boy with sense and made right. Not disfigured. She was sorta glad, she said, the Lord took him while he was little, before she got so devoted to him.

Lomax: What about your family, Vera. What's become of your sisters?

Hall: My older sister Bessie, she died.

Lomax: How old—how old was she when she died?

Hall: She was about—let's see now—she was about 27, I believe, when she died. 27 or 31.

Lomax: Did she marry?

Hall: She did. She married. She didn't live so long after she married because her health got bad. And then she fell. She had a mighty mighty mighty dreadful fall just the same year that she married. And she—

Lomax: What'd she—how'd she fall, honey?

Hall: She was playing "All Hid" one night in the yard. Out in the yard there. We had a big yard. And my father had cut down some trees round the corner of the house and left some stumps of the trees still there. And so the moon was shining *bright* and the yard was just full of children. We was playing and running all around the house, All Hid. And she came running around from this side of the house and making it around to get her hunters, and she fell over that stump. Mmm-mmm, I hate to think about it. She fell over that stump and—I don't know how, we don't know how she fell. But she fell and she hollered one time and so we run there. Mom and Pop and some more grown people sitting up on the porch, they jumped up and come 'round there.

And she just said, "Oooh, I'm just nearly dead." Just like that, say, "I done broke my hip!", is what she said. So they couldn't find a bruised place on her nowhere. They

just tore her clothes off trying to see where she was hurt, but couldn't find anything. But blood came out of her mouth. They didn't know where—why. And so they didn't even have a doctor with her. But just a little blood came out of her mouth. When she talked, you could see blood in her mouth and my momma got a rag and wiped her mouth out. And wet rag and wiped again, thought she busted her lip or bit her tongue. But wasn't nothing like that—the blood came out of her stomach somewhere.

Lomax: Geez!

Hall: So, didn't bleed anymore through the night. And so the next morning she couldn't hardly walk, just kinda drug that side. My mother rubbed her down in some kerosene and some grease—hog lard—together and rubbed her down real good, rubbed her stomach. Let her lie around all day. So the next day she was feeling pretty good—they never did have a doctor with her.

Lomax: Why didn't they?

Hall: I don't know, sir, why they didn't have a doctor. But they didn't. And we was so far out there in the country. I reckon my father—cost eight dollars for the doctor to come out there, excusing the medicine he would have to bring, and I reckon that might have stopped my father. I just don't know, but I know they didn't have a doctor. But she was a grown young lady when she was playing, course she, if I'm not mistake, she married in that same year. But she never did say anymore about that hip bothered her no more until after she was married about three years or maybe. Then she'd get to the place she sit down and couldn't hardly get up. And finally she just got where she couldn't hardly use it—that leg just went paralyzed like on her. Of course she worked hard at home but she worked harder after she got married. After she married, she had to wash and iron and cook and do everything herself. And my mother said she believe it really started failing on her 'cause she had so much work to do.

Stone: Feminist scholars have long worked to bring voices like Hall's out of obscurity and to recognize and valorize the unconventional rhetorics of women who have not been given the platforms traditionally viewed as legitimate. [*begin background music: "Arise My Darling, My Beautiful One" by Hyson (2018b)*] As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (2002) has written, quote, "No matter what contemporary scholars do, the historical record will remain profoundly distorted, skewed toward those lucky enough to be literate, educated, and middle- or upper-class and whose works appeared in mainstream outlets with wider circulation" (p. 46). Unquote. Efforts towards the

"rescue, recovery, and (re)inscription" (Royster & Kirsch, 2012, p. 31) of women's rhetorics by Jacqueline Jones Royster, Gesa Kirsch, and others have provided us with effective antidotes to such distortions and have encouraged a proliferation of new theory, practices, and criticism, resulting in a profound "consciousness-raising" for and about the power of "women's ways of persuading" (Campbell, 2002, p. 45). Such work has the power to completely revise "our mentality toward the history of rhetoric itself" (Enos, 2002, p. 66) as the nontraditional rhetorics of women (and particularly women of color) are reinscribed into the histories that have long been written to exclude, discredit, and otherwise undermine them.

Let's go back to Vera Hall's story now and listen as she relates to Alan Lomax some of the inequities between women and men on the farm.

Timestamp: 23:05 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948e), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Her Mother's Songs and Her Siblings"

Lomax: Woman has a terrible lot to do on the farm.

Hall: Ooh.

Lomax: Do you think she has more to do than a man does?

Hall: I know she does. Because he only has one thing to do, and that's get up and wait for his breakfast. And sit down and eat his breakfast and go on out and catch his mules. And go on the field and hitch up and go to plow. Plow till 12 o'clock and come in and sit down and turn his—feed his mules. Sit down under the tree out there or lay down or something on the bench till dinner's ready. Well now there the wife done went down and chopped until 11 o'clock, then she come home and bring a ton of wood on out to field with her. Got to keep on by the garden somewhere and get some greens or something, and then she just start them going on while she's there. Then she get dinner ready and they eat dinner, well it's nearly time to go back to the field. Well, then he's done rested all that time. They have lots to do.

Lomax: Well, what about the afternoon, honey? What does a woman do?

Hall: Go back to the field!

Lomax: Really? Right with her husband?

Hall: Go right on back out with him. Stay out there till nearly dark, don't stay until real dark. He plows until dark, too dark to see. But she come out before that time

because she have to cook supper, and have to milk the cow, pull up weeds and things for the hogs—things like that. She has to come out before night—get a chance to do all that.

Lomax: Then she's gotta cook supper.

Hall: Got to cook supper.

Lomax: And wash the dishes.

Hall: Wash the dishes, that's right.

[phone rings]

Timestamp: 24:41 | Source: Hall (1948g), "Trouble in Mind"

[Song: "Trouble in Mind." The song is a slow blues. You can hear Hall's voice echoing due to an imperfection of the tape or recording process.]

Hall: Trouble in mind, I'm blue
But I won't be blue always
Ah the sun going shine, babe
In my backdoor someday

I'm gonna lay my head
On some lonesome railroad line
So the Two-Nineteen, babe,
Can satisfy my mind

Well I'm going away
And don't you want to go?
Well, I'm going away
Babe, and don't you want to go?

Timestamp: 25:51 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948e), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Her Mother's Songs and Her Siblings"

[back to discussion on family]

Lomax: Was he a good father to you all?

Hall: He sure was. He really did. He always kept plenty for us to eat. He couldn't give us no clothes, hardly. We had very few clothes, but we had *plenty* to eat. And so, fall of the year, he would buy us shoes and clothes—we didn't have any shoes through the summer. But when it comes getting cold, ginning cotton, he would buy us shoes, winter shoes, and buy us a whole big bolt of homespun cloth and make us all—Momma would makes us all dresses out of that and make herself one too. And then we wouldn't have anything else new until next fall. Momma would sell a few eggs and chickens sometimes, that's to get kerosene, and soap, and starch—stuff like that. But we always had plenty to eat. He raised plenty hogs, corn, syrups, potatoes, and peanuts, and peas. He raised *plenty* of that. We had lots to eat, we just didn't have any clothes, hardly.

Lomax: Would you wear that one, ah, one homespun dress all year-round or would you have two or three to wear?

Hall: Well, the new one, I would save it to wear on Sunday and those old clothes that we'd been have, we wear them all the week. You know we'd buy one—

Lomax: [*interrupting*] What color was your dress, generally, honey?

Hall: Well, it was blue—somewhere, it was blue. Well, the grounds of it was kinda light grayish blue, and it had green stripes and white stripes and red stripes in it. We call it "homespun." And we'd save the new dress to put on on Sunday and wear the old clothes—the old raggedy clothes—near by all the week. And we'd save our shoes. We wouldn't wear them none in the summer time. 'Cause we go to church, we go to church barefooted and all the other children be barefooted, so we'd be barefooted. We wouldn't wear no shoes to church—no time when it was hot—go barefooted.

Lomax: Well honey, you sound like that must, like that hurt your feelings mighty bad not to have a little bit better clothes than that. Were you ashamed on account of it or did that make you feel troubled in your heart or—

Hall: No it didn't. No sir. It didn't bother me the least bit then, at that time, because there's so many of us there like that, we dressed like that. And we was happy. We was just alright. They didn't look no better than we did, and we didn't look no better than them. So when we come out, we all looked alike practically. Maybe different colors in our dresses, but it was the same thing. So no, we wasn't—wasn't sorry or sad at all, we was always happy.

Stone: [Background music: "Arise My Darling, My Beautiful One" by Hyson (2018b). "Arise My Darling" is a synthesizer-based atmospheric instrumental piece.] Hall's response to Lomax here is one of my favorite moments in this collection. He couldn't be more wrong in his assessment of her not having "better" clothes. And if listeners are waiting for Hall to make a political statement or sing a protest song, her comments here and earlier on the discrepancy between men and women's work is about as political as she ever gets. But, as mentioned, that impetus that orients us towards the coupling of rhetorical legitimacy with polemics is part of a traditional historiographical methodology that privileges the rhetoric of men over women. As Hui Wu (2002) argues, it is instead the political concern of feminists to challenge the "traditional categories of history writing" through an "intentionally radical effort to exert transformative power over research methods" (p. 85). Hall's rhetoric is radical not because it is proactive or even necessarily provocative, but rather because it is domestic, religious, and constitutive of family, motherhood, and rural life.

Timestamp: 29:38 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948g), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Rosie Baby and Mother"

Hall: We go to church on Sunday morning and we come back after dinner. We eat our dinner and, well, maybe all the childrens coming over to our house this evening. And they could play over there until it was dark. They mothers wouldn't care. Just whoever house we was at, we could play there on Sunday evening till dark, before we go home.

Timestamp: 30:00 | Source: Hall (1948i), "Young Speckled Lady"

[Song: "Young Speckled Lady"]

That's a young speckled lady (She'll do)
She's just from the country (She'll do)
Golden needle (She'll do)
Now brass-eyed thimble (She'll do)
Oh miss Maddie (She'll do)
Fly way over yonder (She'll do)
You too, miss Sadie (She'll do)
You too, miss Mad— (She'll do)

Timestamp: 30:24 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948h), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Young Speckled Lady"

We'd play like that and when I call those names of those children, they fly from this side to that one. They'd be just flying from that side when I called them like that.

Lomax: Everybody was singing "She'll do."

Hall: Everybody would say "She'll do" when I would give out the words. We'd play that for a long time and then we'd play "Riding in a Buggy." I don't think I've forgot it. It went like that—I did love that, I used to that:

Timestamp: 30:52 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948j), "Riding in a Buggy"

[*Song: "Riding in a Buggy"*]

I'm riding in a buggy (oh yes, oh yes)
It's a golden bright buggy (oh yes, oh yes)
Stop still and let me tell you (oh yes, oh yes)
Now choose your two partners (oh yes, oh yes)
And I wants a good wrapping (oh yes, oh yes)

[*Hall claps and taps her feet during the following section.*]

Oh candy, candy gal
Oh candy, candy gal
Swing 'em in a hurry, candy gal
Swing 'em in a hurry, candy gal
I bought her, candy gal
I bought her, candy gal

[*not sung*] and then we'd ring right back up

[*singing again*] I'm riding in a buggy—

Lomax: How would you play? That's the most beautiful song I ever heard!

Hall: Be rung up—we'd ring up to play that. Ring up in the same ring we played "Speckled Lady" in. But when we stopped—when I said, "Stop still and let me tell you," we all'd stop and drop hands. And I say, [*singing*] "Now choose your two partners"—somebody step out of the ring and get two girls or maybe one girl and a boy. Then say, [*singing*] "Oh yes, Oh yes." And I tell the rest of them, [*singing*] "Said now I wants a good wrapping, oh yes, oh yes." Then we start, [*singing and clapping*,

except during parentheticals] "Oh candy, candy gal, oh candy, candy gal. Swing 'em in a hurry (you'd be swinging 'em!) candy gal, swing 'em in a hurry, candy gal!" (Ring right back up!) "I'm riding in a buggy"—

Lomax: Now would they be marching around while you were singing "riding in a buggy"?

Hall: That's right.

Lomax: Moving slow and easy?

Hall: That's right.

Lomax: Which way would they move, honey? From right to left or left to right?

Hall: Move right—go this way. All the time. Move right.

Lomax: That's a beautiful song—that's a *beautiful* song.

Hall: [*laughs*]

Timestamp: 33:06 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948i), "Interview with Vera Hall about Dance Steps and Patting"

Lomax: Now those were games that you played when you were first beginning to court when you were about 14?

Hall: Yes, sir, they's games that I played when I was—I know that I played them before I reached that age because I've been playing them all my life.

Stone: [*Background music: "Arise My Darling, My Beautiful One" by Hyson (2018b) resumes.*] Like Lomax, I love hearing Hall reminisce about her childhood experiences, including these play songs she learned as a child but just can't stop singing. I'm convinced that Hall's singing and storytelling encourage us towards a revision of traditional renderings of rhetoric and rhetorical practice. "Revision," of course, is a common and useful word used to describe reconsideration or reevaluation. In rhetoric and composition, it is often used in the classroom to describe the process of improving a piece of writing. Revision is also an important practice to bring to disciplinary or even ideological spaces where reassessment might lead to improvement, update or renovation to new standards, or—related—as a way to correct previous omissions. [*background music fades out*]

Richard Leo Enos (2002) argues that by, quote, "*re-visioning* the place of women in the history of rhetoric, an awareness of their 'place' but also an awareness of our limited methods of research [might follow]" (p. 66). Unquote. And while I am never comfortable with men arguing about women's place (and am certainly not seeking to do so here), the sentiment seems accurate: in order to correct the historical repression of women's voices and rhetorics, a radical adjustment of "our perspective on what rhetoric is, our sources of evidence and our methods of retrieval and analysis" must be reached (p. 66).

One way the appreciation and importance of women's rhetorical contributions to the history of rhetoric might be expanded or further nuanced methodologically is through the addition of "re-sound" as a companion to our understanding of "re-vision." Like revision, resounding is an opportunity to hear and therefore think differently about prominent ideas, ideals, or beliefs. But unlike revision, where *correction* is the general goal, re-sounding might be open to any number of alternative epistemologies. Resounding spaces are reverberant, echo and carry sound and, as such, information in slightly different or less deterministic ways than those available to more sight-centered ways of thinking and being. For example, the oral history and singing of childhood game songs like those we've just heard from Vera Hall may not be a typical rhetorical offering. But when women's ways of persuading are acknowledged beyond the conspicuous places of traditionally male literate practice—such as published writing, speeches, and newsletters—game songs resound poignantly against and through such places and new rhetorical space opens up.

What "counts as evidence" in rhetorical scholarship is a paradigm that feminist rhetoricians have been working to resound (Mattingly, 2002, p. 106). As Carol Mattingly argues, "evidence traditionally used to value rhetors simply does not always apply well to women [and we must therefore] seek new perspectives" (p. 105). Indeed, work by Maureen Goggin (Goggin & Tobin, 2016), Jody Shipka (2011), Hannah Bellwoar (Bellwoar & Berrones, 2015), and a recent collection edited by Amber Buck and several of her colleagues (2015) show the ways that craftwork such as sewing, knitting, cooking, and other material folkways can be studied as nontraditional rhetorical work, which is often, if not always, pursued by women. Rendered as song and oral history, Vera Hall's sonic rhetorics come to us as folk practices as integral to everyday life as the craftways mentioned above. In her sessions with Lomax, her most powerful craftworks are her songs, each of which carry with them a sense of authority about how she encountered and responded to her lived experiences.

As a vocalist, Hall demonstrates her power to create and then lead an audience, whether it be in a game or toward a higher power. But attention only to her music would not provide a complete understanding of Hall as a sonic rhetorician. Her vocalized storytelling is nearly always equally compelling. At the time of the recording, Hall's eyesight had failed to a point that prevented her from reading or writing, thus prohibiting her from writing her story down. Nevertheless, Jacqueline

Jones Royster (2000) might characterize Hall's storytelling as an act of literacy. Hall's oral history (as Royster writes), quote, "embod[ies] the rhetorical prowess of an individual vision and voice in a way that can be articulated in terms of eloquence and aestheticism" (p. 43). Unquote. Royster's extensive work on African American women rhetoricians complicates the traditional "great divide" narrative of orality and literacy (e.g., Ong, 1982). Hall's orality in the Lomax interviews demonstrates a keen ear and deft felicity for words and phrasing, punctuated with laughter and other vocalizations that create an easy and familiar bond with her listeners. Hall's sonic rhetorics are compelling craftworks through and through.

These craftworks include frequent stories about Hall's experiences with religion and belief in God. As I have alluded to, Hall's religious life is central to the conversations on the recordings. She sings several spirituals and speaks candidly of her conversion and devotion to Christianity. Remember that the African American church is a complex space, with its early historical ties to the oppression and religious colonization of African slaves which reverberate dissonantly alongside other more recent histories of community, education, and antiracist activism. Resounding typical secular critiques of religious institutions, Hall's faith sustains her through a life where sustenance isn't always easy to come by. In these, the penultimate clips in this essay, we'll hear Hall outlining the contours of her spiritual life, including an earnest retelling of a profound and spiritually confirming experience from her youth.

Timestamp: 37:59 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948a), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Becoming a Christian (II)"

Lomax: What—how did you know it was time for you to join the church when you joined the church?

Hall: I felt like I had Christ, and I and I felt sorry for myself, and I was willing to do just what the preacher had read in the Bible. And so, I felt that way and I believed it: that the Lord would save me if I die—I still believe it. And till he says, it's no use planting cotton if you ain't going to work it. See, that's the way it is with religion. There's no use confessing Christ, owning him here, if you're not going to treasure it up and take care of it. Say, of course, he don't do his work but one time. He don't come into your heart but once, and that's for always.

Lomax: Do you remember what happened that night? How it was?

Hall: Well, I know I felt good and they tell me I shouted—I don't know. But they tell me I just fell off the bench—just fell out. And then when I was up, though, I was sitting back up and so when they came back around to take it in church.

Lomax: Honey, what did it what did it come on you? Do you know? Or what, was the preacher—

Hall: I don't know.

Lomax: Was the preacher happening? Was the preacher—

Hall: He was preaching then. Yeah, I can rem—

Lomax: Do you know what he preached about that night?

Hall: Well, he preached about, uh, I think it was the eagle stirring her nest. I know it was because I remember him taking a text. Course, he said that a mother was just like a eagle caring for her young ones. He was. It was about the eagle stirring her nest. That's what he preached that night.

Lomax: What did he say about it?

Hall: Well, he said that a eagle was—was by her young ones just like a mother was by her children. Said when they are young and in their nest, she would always go off. (I know I can't think of just how he told it because he was looking in the Bible, but anyway.) He said that she would go off and get food and bring it back to them. And then, when they get a certain age, she would put them on her wing and try 'em out and see can they—see can they fly. And says that—how many seen a mother bird sometimes she have a young one, maybe just one—he'd be balancing on her wing and some parts, maybe a foot is on the nest. But find if she get him up there, she's learning him to fly. She'll dart out from under him for a minute and if she see he can't make his way, she'll swing right back up under him, for she'll let him know that he's falling, she'll see that he's falling before she go down under him. So, he just made that parable and went all through it, but he was *preaching*—oo-ee! And I just look like something just hit me—I just don't know what happened to me. But everybody in the church seem like was shouting. Sure was. Everybody there that night looks like to me like they shouted.

Timestamp: 40:54 | Source: Hall (1948c), "He That Believe Have an Everlasting Home"

[*Song: "He That Believe."* "He That Believe" is a spiritual. Hall sings and taps her foot to the beat of the song.]

Oh he that believe, he that believe
Have an everlasting life
Oh he that believes on the Father and the Son
Have an everlasting life

I'm sometime up I'm sometime down
Have an everlasting life
I'm sometime almost level with the ground
Have an everlasting life

Oh he that believe, he that believe
Have an everlasting life
Oh he that believes on the Father and the Son
Have an everlasting life

**Timestamp: 41:43 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948a), "Commentary by Vera Hall
on Becoming a Christian (II)"**

Hall: I wanted to be a Christian so bad that night I didn't know what to do. They took in, I reckon, about twelve or thirteen candidates that night.

Lomax: What happened after that, honey, when you were getting into the church? Did you join the choir that night and then—

Hall: Was baptized on the first Sunday.

Lomax: The next Sunday after that?

Hall: Which was the first Sunday, that's right. We was always baptized. They had twenty-some-odd, I think, they baptized that Sunday.

Lomax: Did you have a special dress to be baptized in?

Hall: I just—my mother made me a white dress. I think she must have made it out of a sheet or something 'cause I don't even remember her going to town that week. But I had a white dress. And if I'm not mistake, I think I heard her say that she took one of her sheets and made me a white dress to put on after I come out the water because she took part of the sheet and made me a baptizing gown. And she made me a dress out of the other part.

Lomax: You were just, uh, then twelve, huh?

Hall: Twelve years old.

Lomax: Did you shout when you fell in—when the bapti—

Hall: When I got in the water? Ooh! When I first stepped off in that water I just—they say I just fainted away or something. But I can remember myself just giving—I don't know where I was going. I was just going away! But when I know anything, he was—I was nearly about at the bank, getting out and I didn't know—only been—don't know when the man dunked me down for nothing in this world.

Lomax: You don't?

Hall: I don't know a thing about it.

Lomax: You don't know how you got out there to be dipped?

Hall: I know when I started out there, one of the deacons held onto my hand and the preacher, he was already in the pool, holding out his hand like that. He had on a black skull-looking cap and his robe was black. And he was standing up there. I saw him before I started down the banks of the pool.

Lomax: Were you scared, honey?

Hall: I don't know if I was scared or no, but looks to me like I might have been something. I just don't know hardly how I felt. But when I first hit that water, I, uh, just looked like something just—ooh, I don't know what happened. But they say I just went on down, said that man had to grab me. That's what my sisters say. And we sure had a wonderful time that day. Mmm-hmm.

Lomax: Tell me what happened.

Hall: You see, after we come out of the water and dressed, we had a little shed there. You go in there and put your dry—pull those wet clothes off and put on dry clothes and your shoes. And then the preacher, he come out and he get his self dressed. Well, he get in the front and we marched all the way back up to church, which I believe was a solid mile. They say it wasn't but a half, but looks to me like it was a mile because my shoes was just hurting my feet! And we walk back up

there and had to sing all the way from the pool back up there: "All My Sins Been Washed Away." That's what we sung.

Lomax: What is that tune?

Timestamp: 44:55 | Source: Hall (1948a), "All My Sins Been Taken Away"

[*Song: "All My Sins Been Taken Away," a spiritual. Hall sings this song in a high soprano register.*]

All my sins been washed away
All my sins been washed away
All my sins been washed away
Glory Hallelujah tell me Jesus' name
All my sins been washed away, Hallelu

Oh Mary wore three links of chain
Oh Mary wore three links of chain
Mary wore three links of chain
Ev'ry link was my Jesus' name
All of my sins been washed away, washed away

Timestamp: 45:55 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948b), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Becoming a Christian (III)"

We had to sing that all the way back up to the church. But it was a good time. People was just shouting in that line—ooh! They was just shouting and hollering in that line while we were going back. It was a good time. Mmm-hmm, it was a good time.

Lomax: Have you ever had any of these visions and things since, uh, since you were converted?

Hall: I have. I—I got kinda worried about myself long after a while. It wasn't so long after I 'fessed religion. I felt downhearted—some of them say—you hear so many people talk about the way they come, but everybody don't get religion alike. They don't have the same thing. I learned that. And, uh, I was kind of worried about myself, and so I told my mother's sister's husband—we calls him Buddy. Buddy Down. He's dead now. So I told him—he was the deacon of our church, and I told him one day, I said, "Buddy," I said, "Is you supposed to feel good all the time after

you get religion? Just feel happy and, uh, just feel like shouting all?" He says, "No, you ain't gonna feel that way." Say, "There's too much temptation in this big world for you to feel that way." Say, "You know you loves to sing, you always trying to sing." Say, "You know you love to watch the boys dance, and you love to hear them ol' boys down yon' sing them blues and you always listening 'cause I've heard you laughing at them down there. Now that tempts you—be fair!"

I said, "Yes, it sure do! I do like to hear some!" Say, "Well, alright." Say, "Well, how you gonna keep the same spirit of God and all those things is tempting you? Temptation you every now and again, till you can't do it, see. You can't do it. You just have to pray and keep you strong as you can here in this sinful world." That's what he told me. Said, "I've been in church all, nearly all my life. And you see how old I am. See how white my head is. I've been a deacon for over 35 years. And I was a Christian about nearly 20 years before I come to be a deacon. So you know I've been in the church service a long time." I say, "Yessir. You sure is." He said, "Well you ain't gonna keep that feelings all the time." He said, "Just pray. Pray. I tell you what you do." Say, "If you think you on the wrong road, ask the Lord! Just get on your knees and ask him. Say, 'Lord if I'm right and you's going to save me when I die.'" Say, "Tell him to show it to you some way," say, "and you will have a vision to come to you."

And so I prayed that night, but I didn't see anything. But I still goin' pray. So I prayed the next night. So I lied down and as—I don't know whether I was asleep or no, but I hadn't been in the bed long enough, I don't think, to be asleep. So I—the first thing come up—my mother had a old wooden bed and we slept there. And so I could hear something, some singing over the head of the bed. I don't know—looked like it was too far off to understand it, but I know it was somebody. I was just lying there and there and this, this:

Timestamp: 49:07 | Source: Hall (1948f), "Show Me the Way"

[singing material in quotation marks] "Mmm Lord, show me the way." But it was waaaay yonder! "When I'm standing wondering, show me the way. Oh Lord. When I'm standing wondering, show me the way. Now, show me how to watch and pray."

Timestamp: 49:38 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948c), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Becoming a Christian (IV)"

And I jumped up and looked all around in the room. I looked everywhere. And I called my momma. They was in the next room.

I said, "Momma! Momma!" She said, "Whoop? What's the matter?" (She called me "Doll" all the time.) Said, "What's the matter, Doll?" I said, "Somebody is just singing all through this house!" And she said, "Oh, you just dreaming." Papa said—he got up and come to the door—he said, "What's the matter with you?" I said, "Papa, somebody is just singing all in the top of this house." Said, "What they singing?" "When I'm standing wondering, Lord, show me the way." He said, "Well, that's a good song." Said, "That's the Lord! The Lord come to you in a visit tonight, didn't he?" Said, "I don't know, sir, but somebody got this room rung up!" And Momma said, "That's what it is, Doll." Said, "That's the Lord. He gave you a good vision tonight." Said, "Sleep happy! Turn over on the other side [*claps*] and just sleep with a smile. That was the good Lord [*claps*] coming to visit you tonight. Showed you a good visit. Did it sound good to you?" Said, "Momma, it just rung all over me! It just woke me up!" She said, "Well, that's good!" [*claps several times*] Just like that. And Papa looked at me and smiled and said, "I believe my little ol' daughter do belong to church, don't she!" I said, "Papa, I do!" [*laughs*]

Stone: [*background music: "Somber Heart" by Lee Rosevere (2018)*] Like many African American women who lived during or directly after the Great Depression, Hall found refuge and opportunities for racial uplift in church. As Darlene Clark Hine (1996) writes, quote,

When disasters of economic depression, bankruptcy, and disease struck black communities ... black church women were there to keep communities functioning. They created orphanages and launched philanthropies to help widows and the aged. They taught Sunday schools, did missionary work, and participated in endless fund-raising drives to pay off church mortgages. The church rests most securely upon the backs of black women. (p. 57)

Unquote. Surely this was the case with Vera Hall, as corroborated by her many stories and songs on the Lomax tapes. But Hall enjoyed a secular life as well, enjoyed dancing, socializing, and a stiff drink from time to time. In this, the final recording in this audio essay, listen as she relates her experience, opinions, and a song about race relations in the South in the first half of the twentieth century.

Timestamp: 51:48 | Source: Hall (1948b), "The Black Cat (The Black Cat and the White Cat)"

[Song: "Black Cat and White Cat." This song is a blues. Hall extends the word "man" to sound like a cat yowling. Again, we hear some echoing on the recording due to an imperfection on the tape or recording.]

Black cat and the white cat
Lay in the cold one day
The white cat told the black cat
Man, I wish that I was dead

The black cat told the white cat
Man, let's go cross town and clown
The black cat told the white cat
Man, let's go cross town and clown
The white cat told the black cat
Man, set you black self down

Timestamp: 52:44 | Source: Lomax & Hall (1948f), "Commentary by Vera Hall on Interracial Relationships"

Hall: That's all of that. I don't know, it's just some Rich Amerson stuff. [*laughs*]

Lomax: You know what he's talking about?

Unidentified man: [*simultaneously with Lomax*] [*unintelligible*] —Rich Amerson.

Hall: Sir?

Lomax: What—what does this explain to you about men, anyway? What's it mean?

Hall: Well, he told me, he said that that was just like a, maybe a white person and a nigger. You know, they was out somewhere way on the outskirts of town. Of course, a white person down there don't associate much with a negro unless'n he is hid behind something. If he hid, why he do most anything. So he told us that just like a white man and a negro was out somewhere and the white man, he ain't got so much money, but he kinda on a drinking spree. And so, him and the nigger just lean up maybe on a bank or a creek or ditch or anything. So just laying down, he says, you know, says that the nigger tells the white man, he says, um, says, "Let's go across town and clown," or something like that. So he explain his self, say, "Clown? How?" [*phone rings in background*] "Let's go get somewhere and get some whiskey

and get drunk!" So he said, "Man, set your black self down." He don't want to go out in public like that, you know.

But the old nigger don't care. He just like me! He don't care where we get drunk, only if we have opportunity to get drunk at! But they put us in jail by getting drunk. So, uh, he keeps talking round there, and so the man—the white man—he just lay there or maybe sit there not—studying about this, studying, just deep studying. After a while he'll look over there and at him and say, "Man, I wish I was dead." And that's why because he haven't got anything and hate to be out in public associating with a nigger, you know. And so he just sighed he wish he was dead. Something like that. But the old nigger, you know, we ain't never had nothing, and no never expect to have nothing, so we don't care. So we just seem to go anywhere and get drunk and clown. That's why he invited him: "Let's go across town and clown!" He looked like he was so worried about something. So he, he wouldn't take the exception, so he just said it: "Man, I wish I was dead." So that's what Rich Amerson told me about it—that's all I know about it. *[laughs]* Said that's the way it was.

Lomax: That's a mighty big blues. That's about the biggest blues I ever heard in my life!

Hall: *[laughs]*

Lomax: Is there a lot of that that goes on down there in *[unintelligible]*?

Hall: Plenty of it. Plenty of it.

Lomax: Lots of it.

Hall: Plenty of it.

Lomax: Only the, the white folks don't know about it.

Hall: Don't know about it.

Lomax: Just the colored folks know about that?

Hall: That's right. They get with us there on Saturday night and kick out more sport than us because they got more money than we got. He say he haven't got any, but at least what he got is more than what we got. And he just kick out a gang of sport if we hide him, you see. We stash him, maybe in my house and don't nobody come

to my house much because I always keep my windows and things closed and doors locked and everything.

Lomax: Well, what if a white man does come to your house? Do you let him in if you don't know him?

Hall: I won't let him in if I don't know him. But if I know him and know that he's alright and just want to get somewhere in a place to get him a smile, you know, something without anybody knowing, why sure—come on in, I'll hide you. Sit him back there and maybe in my kitchen. I don't have but just one room and the kitchen. Sit him back there in the kitchen so if anybody else comes to the door they won't be so apt to see him. And I'll go out and get whatever he wants and let him drink there as long as he want to. And if he get too high to leave, I sleep him there till around five o'clock, let him lie down on the bed go to sleep till he get straight—just before day—just since he leave there before daylight. And then let him see, can he see is he able to get home. Take care of him until he get able to get home. That's the way a lot of us do around there. But the most average of white people doesn't know it—doesn't know that we do it. But, we drinks and if we find a white person that does drink, we take care of him. Hide him till he gets sober and then slip him out.

Timestamp: 57:02 | Source: Hall (1948h), "Wild Ox Moan (III)"

[Song: "Wild Ox Moan." With several repeating lines, "Wild Ox Moan" is a slow, work-song blues.]

Ah-hmm, run here black woman
Ah-hmm, and sit on daddy's knee

Ah-hmm, I got something to tell you pretty momma
Ah-hmm, don't you holler and plea

Ah-hmm, well I'm going up the country
Ah-hmm, don't you wan' go?

Ah-hmm, well I'm going out in Texas
Ah-hmm, to hear that wild ox moan

Ah-hmm, 'cause if he don't want to sue me
Ah-hmm, I'm going drive my bell cow home

Ah-hmm, well my clothes look lonesome
Ah-hmm, hanging on their line

Ah-hmm, well my kitchen feel lonesome
Ah-hmm, when my biscuit roller's gone

Stone: [*Background music: "Somber Heart" by Lee Rosevere (2018) resumes.*] My name is Jon Stone, and this has been "Work, Play, and Worship: Vera Hall's Vernacular Rhetorical Voice," the second of two parts in this chapter titled "Resounding History." Thanks for listening.