

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

John Fahey (1939-2001) represents the archetype of the American voice in music. In a country with no inherent shared tradition, he was able to assemble from his own influences a style that is at once uniquely his own, as well as one that speaks for every individual who sets out to establish an identity amidst the shared dilemma of disparate culture found in the United States. Fahey's contributions are extensive, from legitimizing the steel-string guitar as a concert instrument to serving as a model for independent record producer/owners. He not only contributed to the body of American music by releasing his own recordings, but also those of other like minded musicians, helping create a distinct style of American music that continues to this day. But more than anything else, John Fahey's career represents a process in formulating a cultivated voice out of an idiosyncratic vernacular, culled from personal influences and circumstances, many of which are particular to twentieth-century America.

The two main components of John Fahey's style, European concert music and what is commonly thought of as American "folk" forms, came to him through the same avenue: recordings. Having been born shortly before World War II, he did not have the luxury of formal musical training, nor was he exposed to folk culture in a traditional way.

I had a big background in classical music [via recordings] . . . I started trying to compose. I was playing the guitar but I heard an orchestra in my head. So, I was really composing for full orchestra. . . I was trying to put together some dissonant music . . . but played in the fingerpicking pattern which I still use [prewar folk and blues]. So I was trying to put those two things together into a

coherent musical language which people would understand.¹

Fahey referred to his style of music as “American Primitive,” simply meaning that it was of self-taught origin.² His exposure to music came not only from his early childhood, but from his peers, local groups, the radio, and most importantly recordings. Fahey, like many other post-war suburban teens, became enamored by the sounds that could be found on old 78 rpm recordings from the late 1920s and early 1930s. Seeking out the nearly lost discs on record collecting trips that included canvassing neighborhoods door to door, the music, mostly race and old-time recordings, became the unlikely soundtrack for groups of people that were never intended to hear them.³ These early musical experiences were used by Fahey to form a cultivated style that represented the cumulative effect of his influences. The majority of these influences were derived from recordings. This experience is shared by a large portion of Americans, who by virtue of their own musical exposure continue to form their own unique and sophisticated musical languages through recorded mediums.

The relationship between music and technology since the mid-twentieth century has been discussed by musicologists Elliot Schwartz and Daniel Godfrey in their book Music Since 1945: Issues, Materials and Literature.⁴ Among other criteria, they conclude that both the advent of the LP (long playing) record and the magnetic tape machine not only changed the way music has been composed, performed, and archived, but it has ultimately changed the way music is listened to, fundamentally changing the way music is experienced.⁵ They refer to this phenomena as “The Loudspeaker Revolution,” yet its origins date back well before 1945. Both the LP and magnetic tape evolved out of earlier forms of recording

¹ John Fahey, John Fahey in Concert, prod. by Terry Robb and Jesse Block, 72 min., Vestapol, 1996, videocassette.

² The term “American Primitive” was both accepted and disregarded by Fahey on different occasions. For this reason it was originally to be left from this study, but serves to clarify the subject well.

³ See Chapter 2.

⁴ Elliot Schwartz and Daniel Godfrey, Music Since 1945: Issues, Materials, and Literature (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1993).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26-28.

practices that began late in the nineteenth century, gathering momentum in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The post-war years can be seen as a period in which the effects of recorded sound can be viewed more unilaterally. Not only was technology affecting contemporary music, but one of the first instances of retroactive listening occurred, in which older music that was more or less obsolete was being experienced for the first time by an entirely new generation through recordings. This music not only included the “folk” styles being gathered by record collectors, but also what could be considered “popular” and concert forms. For Fahey and others like him, recordings served as a means of learning music, forming a folk-like connection to popular culture. This process, which will be investigated through John Fahey’s life and music, will provide the foundation necessary to understand how the overall voice of American music in the twentieth century can potentially be defined.

At the center of the discussion about Fahey’s contribution to an American identity is the relationship between “vernacular,” assumed for the moment to be defined as folk, and “cultivated” music. Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl wrote about the use of folk materials and the relationship to cultivated music in his book Folk Music in the United States.⁶ With regard to Europeans, he states that at one time composers drew equally from both the concert and their inherent folk traditions in an unconscious way.⁷ This assumes a very intimate relationship with both folk and cultivated music that is tied into a culture and experienced from a very young age. Only through this type of relationship is one able to fully synthesize the subtleties of a tradition into a more sophisticated language. Nettl believes that there is a “common musical heritage and experience and the sharing of a common culture” that composers of a single country held amongst themselves, and that “today . . . the cultivated music in a country derives from the same undifferentiated tradition as the folk music.”⁸

⁶ Bruno Nettl, Folk Music in the United States: An Introduction (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976).

⁷ Ibid., 157-8.

⁸ Ibid., 158.

Applying this theory to a definition of American music is not easy. The assumption that a cultivated music and a folk music of a single country both have similar origin, sharing in what Nettl calls an “undifferentiated tradition” is difficult given the history of the United States. This would explain the general focus on European tradition in the United States. The problem with assuming this tradition is that, by virtue of its relationship with the United States, it is a transplanted tradition. The assumption is also that the United States remains an extension of this tradition and must continue to operate accordingly. This undermines the very dogma of the United States: the amalgam of disparate cultures. Anthropologist Allan P. Merriam, writing on music and the United States in 1955, concluded: “The music of Charles Ives or Aaron Copland has a distinctive touch, but in last analysis the form and the concept are European derived even though they may have been extended somewhat.” Merriam believed that the music of the United States was influenced by several musical traditions, including European concert, European folk, popular, and African-American folk.⁹

Just as an inherited European concert tradition is inadequate in establishing a foundation for American music, so are some fundamental ideas surrounding folk music. Folk music in the United States has not been defined by the traditional definition of oral dissemination, but rather has been defined mainly through scholars and collectors, such as the Englishman Francis James Child, Cecil Sharp, and later the Lomax family, who documented the music first by score, and later by recordings.¹⁰ The exposure to this music by the majority of Americans since the 1920s, and especially after World War II, has not been through a community, but rather through books, recordings, and radio broadcasts. This relationship with mass media, and subsequently popular culture, is the main idea behind understanding the way in which musical identity has been developed in the United States. As musicologist Richard Crawford wrote, it is not whether or not American music is better or worse than European, rather “American music is shown to have values different

⁹ Alan P. Merriam, “Music in the United States,” *American Anthropologist* 57 (December 1955) : 1173-4.

¹⁰ See Chapter 2.

from, rather than inferior to, European music — values in which the center of gravity is found in popular, rather than so-called serious, music forms.”¹¹ This not only undermines oral dissemination, but puts a multitude of musical styles available within the same means, blurring distinctions between forms and traditions.

Considering a definition for American music before the twentieth century takes for granted the relative youth of the United States and does not take into account the idea that the culture of the United States has been in a developmental stage since its inception. Until the twentieth century the United States had not identified completely what its cultural roots would be. Musical styles previously held as European concert and American folk are a part of this definition, as are jazz and popular forms, but the actual way in which this music has functioned during the twentieth century is what is most important. It has not been by normally assumed means, and this change in the receiving of information has sometimes placed authenticity in question. More simply put, since popular music is commonly accepted as inferior, it has been largely left out of discussions concerning influences on the music of the United States. If consideration would be given, it would become apparent that it is not the music itself, but the popular music experience that has had greatest impact. Musicologist Simon Frith considered this as well: “The question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about ‘the people’ but how does it construct them.”¹²

In order to define the musical identity of the United States, two things must be determined: first, how has the folk, or vernacular, of the country been defined and interpreted by the influence of technological developments throughout the twentieth century; and second, how has this effected what is thought of as a cultivated music. If these criteria can be addressed, examined, and defined, a more coherent model of American music, one that manifested itself during the twentieth century, can be used to better understand the culture of the United States.

In the case of folk music, understanding the subjective way in which it has

¹¹ Richard Crawford, American Studies and American Musicology (New York: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1975) , 3.

¹² Simon Frith, “Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music,” in Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception, eds. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University) , 133.

been defined needs to be addressed. Cultivated music, instead of being a synonymous style in tandem with folk, will be approached in a functionalist manner, one that views it as something that has resulted from the American tradition thus far, and one that is best represented through process, not style. This approach will confront the idea of popular music and will contribute to a better understanding of the effect it has, and continues to have, on culture in the United States. Furthermore, divisions between art, folk, and popular music can be examined, and a more cohesive interpretation of musicology can be realized, aiding in further cultural studies not fraught with categorical divisions.

The two most important terms to define in order to better understand this research are vernacular and cultivated. Traditional definitions of vernacular define it more or less as community based:

Vernacular music is accessible to the majority of people because of their familiarity with its forms and functions and because they are able to acquire knowledge of it through everyday practice . . . One acquires a vernacular music as one would a language, naturally and through communication with others.¹³

The idea that vernacular is available to the majority and is easily learned connects it with folk music. The problem with making this connection is that certain criteria used to define folk music conflict with certain ideas involving vernacular. The definition set out in 1955 by the International Folk Music Council held that “folk music was the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission . . . [and] the definition [does] not cover composed popular music that [has] been taken over ready-made by a community.”¹⁴

Even though specific musical genres are not listed to describe vernacular styles, the overwhelming acceptance is of traditional folk and popular music. Popular music in general has been difficult to define in exact terms, but one aspect almost unanimously accepted is that its means of dissemination is by mass media. This is an obvious conflict with the folk definition and is why folk, popular, and vernacular

¹³ Philip V. Bohlman, “Vernacular Music,” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2000), 484-485.

¹⁴ Carole Pegg, “Folk Music,” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2000), 63-67.

styles often conflict and become stratified, as well as distinguished, by style, preventing the music from being defined by experience instead of type; popular music is *this*, and folk music is not *that*.

Historian Benjamin Filene has taken issue with these definitions as well:

Given the explosion of mass media, rigid definitions of folk music become especially illusory when applied to the twentieth century. Since the turn of the century, even seemingly isolated musicians have spent their afternoons listening to phonographs and dreaming of recording contracts.¹⁵

Filene's solution is to define vernacular in close relation to more commonly held definitions, citing "songs employing a musical language that is current, familiar, and manipulatable by ordinary people . . . under this definition vernacular not only includes Appalachian mountain music or blues but also [popular] music."¹⁶ Filene attempts to represent the effects of mass dissemination by combining folk and popular music, but he also points out that fine art or classical music is not a part of this definition.

The definition used in this research makes absolutely no distinction, taking Filene's inclusions and exclusions, treating not the music, but the experience of the exposure to the music, as the vernacular. One underlining argument being made here is that the idea of an oral experience in music, as defined by folk, is no longer possible in a pure, uninfluenced way. The new folk experience is one that offers any music to the listener, and at early exposure this is usually without bias. Radio, records, and other types of mass communication have replaced the oral folk community experience. Therefore, any type of music can be heard in this manner, whether folk, popular, jazz, global, or European concert and experimental forms. When a person is exposed to music by these means, and it occurs early in musical development and ultimately is used to form a musical vocabulary, it is a vernacular experience, and these musical styles become a part of the underlying language of a cultivated style.

Understanding vernacular is the first step towards understanding what is

¹⁵ Benjamin Filene, Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

meant by a cultivated style. To interpret Nettl, he assumed that what he referred to as folk and cultivated styles coexisted together as separate and distinct styles. Richard Crawford, referencing American musicologist H. Wiley Hitchcock, maintains a similar definition, defining “‘vernacular’ [as]— music which one has ‘grown into’ naturally without effort or selfconsciousness— to be replaced by the ‘cultivated’— music consciously sought after and studied for the spiritual edification it offers.”¹⁷

This relationship provided two unique musical experiences, each one functioning in its own way. The relationship being examined in this research puts vernacular as the starting point for a cultivated style. The cultivated style is one that is formed from a musical vocabulary built on the foundation of vernacular musical experiences. The cultivated style can vary from individual to individual, but must have a clear sophistication regardless of its idiosyncratic nature. In other words, there must be a clear development of these influences and they should be noticeable with some degree of analysis. Again, the cultivated style may change and will logically vary, but the process remains the same. It will be clear by examining John Fahey that his example illustrates this theory well.

American Primitive, a term used and defined earlier, should be briefly acknowledged again here. Fahey went back and forth with this term, and when interviewed in 1969 on Guitar Guitar, claimed that someone else had described his music by that definition, adding “primitive means self-taught; I didn’t have any teachers. If I had to call it anything I’d call it that [American Primitive], [but] I wouldn’t worry about calling it anything.”¹⁸ The term was also included in a Takoma Records press release/biography on John Fahey written by Barry Hansen. This time, three years after that interview, it is defined more in context with its intended definition, and in this case accepted by Fahey:

When asked to describe the guitar style that has caused all this activity in and around Fahey, John replies that he plays in the ‘American Primitive’ manner. The term— first used in the field of art history to describe painters who shunned the European-Oriented art school tradition and depicted the

¹⁷ Crawford, 7.

¹⁸ John Fahey and Elizabeth Cotten, Rare Interviews and Performances from 1969, prod. by Laura Weber, 60 min. Vestapol, 1994, videocassette.

American scene through their own instincts— fits Fahey to a T.¹⁹

American Primitive is an accepted way of defining Fahey's cultivated style, and as has been illustrated by other musicians, first on the Takoma imprint, and today in a much broader sense, clear examples of this style continue to exist. The goal of this research is not to defend this style, rather to accept it and use it accordingly, examining the philosophy behind it.

In order to understand the full scope of the material for this research, this study is organized into five main chapters and two appendix sections. The information presented here constitutes the first introductory and background chapter. The second chapter considers the tradition of folk song collecting in the United States and its relationship to the phonograph industry. The difficulty surrounding folk music definitions is the focus, as well as how after World War II record collectors began to redefine folk music by seeking out these recordings, mostly through 78 rpm records. This process, known as record collecting, is shown as a fundamental technique of vernacular building, which is tied to the field of popular music, and includes the experience of radio and other means of mass dissemination. The aim of this section is to show how popular music culture, through the process of seeking out and listening to recordings, became a part of collecting equal to the actual recording process in preserving folk music after World War II. This section concludes near the period of the folk revival, the late 1950s to early 1960s, when this was an active part of cultural practice in the United States. During this period John Fahey had established the primary elements of his vernacular mainly through this process, and had begun his professional career. Since this section "sets the stage" for examining Fahey's life, very little direct reference is made to him.

The third chapter serves as general background on and a brief biography of John Fahey. Five periods of his life are discussed, roughly covering five decades. It starts with an overview and discussion of his early life, then moves through sections examining his life during the 1960s until his death in 2001. The two most important sections are the first two, since these are the periods in which his vernacular style was

¹⁹ Barry Hansen, Takoma Records press release, 1972.

developed and what would become his cultivated style was most thoroughly manifested. Since Fahey's style continued to grow and incorporated new variations on his cultivated technique, particularly in the early 1970s and in the later years of his life, it is necessary to show these developments as well.

The fourth chapter is devoted to transcriptions of Fahey's music and illustrates how he turned his vernacular into a cultivated style. It discusses this process and ways to approach defining it. Specific examples of John Fahey's vernacular are presented through transcription. These examples deal primarily with excerpts Fahey took from records and represent vernacular influences that can be traced to statements made by him. Some generalizations and simplification are used, but the focus remains on his own statements as well as examples that can be clearly found in his own music.

Another example of Fahey's vernacular, what he refers to as "classical" music, but what this research will refer to as European art or concert music, is discussed in prose form by a much more general aesthetic. The aim is to connect this influence equally with the other examples of Fahey's vernacular, and to break down the subjectivity between the styles in order to provide a foundation for the process that is illustrated in this research.

Transcriptions of Fahey's music will be used to illustrate a very general overview of his cultivated style and its relationship to his vernacular. The pieces that have been chosen emphasize his solo compositions, and include compositions from both his early career as well as from his later period.

Two compact discs containing audio examples of the music transcribed have been included. For the most part, specific excerpts have not been noted, rather it is assumed that the reader will utilize the recordings to better understand the music in a general way. It is suggested that the reader listen to each audio example at least one time before studying the transcriptions. It cannot be overstated that the music transcribed was never meant to be notated. Music of this nature does not translate to paper as well as material composed straight to the staff. In order to fully understand how this music can influence an individual, it must be experienced in the same

manner– by listening.

The final chapter offers brief conclusions about the material presented, thoughts on further research, and consideration of Fahey's continuing influence. Appendix 1 is a discography of Fahey's recordings up to the completion of this research. Appendix 2 is a transcription of the memorial held shortly after his death in Salem, Oregon. The transcription includes all scheduled speakers, as well as selected persons who were allowed to speak after the formal service. Appendix 3 is a song list of the audio examples included on the accompanying compact discs. The order of the songs correspond to the order of the transcriptions found in Chapter 4.

The materials used vary greatly due to the broad nature of the theories being addressed. Aspects covering American music in general, over sixty years of folk collecting, background and historical relevance on radio and the record industry, as well as popular music and its relationship to society are all part of the research. To list all relative publications at this point would prove too much to be useful. Many standard texts on these subjects have been used and should be familiar, but due to the nature of this work, many contrasting materials needed to be reviewed, and therefore cohesive listing in this manner is difficult. A complete list of texts both directly cited and used as models of influence are listed in the bibliography, and of course when needed, will be referenced in the research itself.

Information regarding John Fahey may, however, need some attention. Despite Fahey's prolific career and public persona, he remained mostly in the underground for the majority of his life. Articles and interviews have come mainly from the popular press, and for the most part are helpful in gaining consistent bibliographical information when used together. Several articles are more useful than others, including articles by Byron Coley, Michael Brooks, Mark Humphrey, Dale Miller and Edwin Pouncey.²⁰ These more substantial articles are joined with several shorter pieces that are referenced when needed.

²⁰ Michael Brooks, "John Fahey: Turtle Blues," Guitar Player, March 1972, 20; Mark Humphrey, "John Fahey", Acoustic Guitar August 1980, 22; Mark Humphrey, "An Existential Guitarist Packs His Bags," Reader 15 May 1981, 4; Dale Miller, "Reinventing the Steel," Acoustic Guitar January/February 1992; Edwin Pouncey, "Blood on the Frets," Wire August 1998.

These and many more articles are archived or originally published online. Three excellent databases for obtaining these materials are johnfahey.com, [Perfect Sound Forever](http://Perfect Sound Forever at furious.com/perfect/index.html) at furious.com/perfect/index.html and [Clicks and Klangs](http://Clicks and Klangs at clicks-and-klangs.com) at clicks-and-klangs.com. It should be noted that careful consideration has been taken when utilizing online material, but it should also be recognized that all articles used have come from reputable sources and used in conjunction with other sources to provide more thorough accounts. If online sources were omitted, many professional and valid original and reprinted articles would not have been available.

In addition to written interviews, some video recordings are also used. The 1969 performance and interview on a shortly lived television show [Guitar Guitar](#) and a live concert recording with interview segments recorded in 1996.²¹ Two transcription books, [The Best of John Fahey: 1959-1977](#) and [The Guitar of John Fahey](#) are not only useful for gaining perspectives on the music, but as is the case with [Best of . . .](#) include writing from and about Fahey, as well as his own selected discography of influential recordings.²²

The liner notes to many Fahey albums provide a good amount of insight and information. Not just the original notes, but the reissue notes to the albums that became available in the 1990s are very thorough and well documented accounts of the periods surrounding the original recordings. One notable example of these reissue notes are to [The Legend of Blind Joe Death](#) compiled by Glenn Jones. Fahey's own writings, such as the notes to [The Voice of the Turtle](#), have proved useful at understanding some aspects of the music and its influences.²³ Liner notes to other recordings such as the notes to the Harry Smith [Anthology of American Folk volumes I-IV](#), with contribution from Fahey, show not just the influence these

²¹ John Fahey and Elizabeth Cotten, [Rare Interviews . . .](#) ; John Fahey, [John Fahey in Concert](#).

²² John Lescroat ed., [The Best of John Fahey: 1959-1977](#) (New York: Guitar Player Books, 1978); Stefan Grossman ed., [The Guitar of John Fahey](#) (Pacific:Mel Bay 1995).

²³ John Fahey, [The Legend of Blind Joe Death](#), Takoma TAKCD-8901-2, (1954, 1964, 1963, 1967) 1996; John Fahey, [The Voice of the Turtle](#), Takoma TAKCD-6501-2 (c-1019), (1968) 1996.

recordings have had on Fahey, but also the culture at large through the recordings.²⁴

Other than liner notes, Fahey's own writing serves as an important source of information. Two published books, the 1970 book Charley Patton and the 2000 semi-autobiographical How Bluegrass Destroyed My Life are invaluable aids not only because of their content, but also because they provide other angles necessary to a complete understanding of his life and music.²⁵ Other shorter articles by Fahey are also used.

The transcriptions are primarily original and not copied from published material. This includes not only examples of Fahey's vernacular, including concert traditions, but Fahey's own music as well.

In addition to material already published, original interviews have been necessary in order to fill in some missing information that pertains to this research. Interviews with people who knew Fahey either personally or professionally are used. These include interviews with Barry Hansen, George Winston, Dick Spottswood, and Ed Denson.

A special resource, including twenty bootlegged recordings, numerous articles, photographs, and personal artifacts of John Fahey's were loaned by George Winston and were invaluable in helping to clarify aspects illustrated in both the text and the transcriptions. One disclaimer that should be made with regard to these materials is that many of the articles sent were copies from the original, and therefore were often incomplete, making thorough annotation difficult, if not impossible. Despite attempts to find original sources for many of the articles, some remain incomplete. The incomplete sources mainly lack page numbers and particulars relating to publishing, but the vast majority include the author, title, and name of publication. It would have been far more inappropriate to leave these sources out of the research; therefore, when necessary, these sources are listed as "incomplete" in both footnotes and bibliography.

²⁴ Harry Smith ed., Anthology of American Folk Music, Volumes One, Two and Three, Folkways SFW 40090, (1952) 1997, compact discs; Harry Smith ed., Anthology of American Folk Music, Volume Four, Revenant RVN 211, compact discs.

²⁵ John Fahey, Charley Patton (London:Studio Vista, 1970); John Fahey, How Bluegrass Destroyed My Life (Chicago:Drag City Press, 2000).

This study focuses on the musical identity of the twentieth century in the United States as illustrated through John Fahey and only deals with ideas defined therein. If argument is made for theories held previously about this period, they will be moot since the nature of this study involves specific influences that are inherent to the twentieth century. A thorough examination of the record industry and related issues surrounding radio cannot be fully detailed, and the main concern is the influence of recordings and the way interpretations changed with regard to recordings during the twentieth century. Complete evaluation of the assumptions about folk music, particularly those that came about during the folk revival of the 1950s and 60s are not fully addressed. In addition, the background on John Fahey is not meant to serve as a full and complete biography, therefore certain personal aspects of Fahey's life are mentioned with very little detail. Furthermore, the examples of Fahey's music are selective, and not meant to be completely representative in every aspect of his style, but rather a broad overview that is used to substantiate the theory addressed in this research.

These are logical dilemmas, and American studies in general tend to be difficult to mount. Richard Crawford wrote:

The scholar of American music has no established value-system (even his monuments sometimes speak in riddles), his archive is a kind of junkheap—the gems are buried in a rubble of sheet music, newspaper clippings, song collections, manuscripts by unknowns—and the best maps are on the other side of the tracks. What the scholar of American music is left with, then, is a huge mass of music and materials—mostly unassimilated, a few excellent tools for handling it, and a belief which he hopes is not an illusion.²⁶

Despite the fact that Crawford wrote this statement nearly thirty years before this study, it is still quite accurate. Added to this, the major obstacle of this research has been John Fahey's death before this study could be completed. That being the case, some assumptions had to be made with regard to certain influences, and to what extent Fahey utilized these influences. This effects the influence of concert music claimed by Fahey, further complicated by the fact that he admitted to have very limited skills at reading notated music. Therefore, great effort will be made to

²⁶ Crawford, 3.

correlate Fahey's compositions with the influences that he claims to make up the compositions.²⁷

Regardless of these issues, this research proves itself to be a very necessary tool for further cultural studies in the United States, and serves as a much needed work in propelling Fahey's legacy further into American musical history. It is assumed that there has been a consistent breakdown between methodologies concerning folk, popular and concert music, and that the separation has created problems with maintaining focus when dealing with subjects. It is believed with every bit of idealism that this research will move in a direction toward solving this problem, and that the musical life of John Fahey will be recognized more clearly for what it is: a twentieth-century American musical voice and a prototype of American music.

²⁷ Fahey claimed not to be able to read music, but also admitted to having enlisted Al Wilson to help with music theory when writing his thesis on Charley Patton. The melodic examples notated in Fahey's thesis had to have come more or less from him since it was a major portion of the work. It may have been impossible for Fahey to notate what Barry Hansen called "mind compositions," but it is this researcher's opinion that Fahey could deal with melodic fragments at the very least.