Keren Omry

Cross-Rhythms

Jazz Aesthetics in African-American Literature

Cross-Rhythms

Continuum Literary Studies Series

Also available in the series:

Cross-Rhythms

Jazz Aesthetics in African-American Literature

Keren Omry

Contents

Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been quite a journey. The marvellous people who have accompanied and assisted me along this path are too numerous to list, but I wish to name and thank a few whose presence or contribution has been at times critical, at times a luxury, but always a gift:

Introduction

The rhythms of this book are manifold: the break-neck and dead-slow beat of race, the spurts, blasts and hum of jazz, and the inevitable drums of history; the tip tap tat of the keyboard, the buses screeching and heels clacking in outside noise, inside mind churning, pages turning, books thumping, kettle gurgling, these all meet and intersect to compose the soundtrack of *Cross-Rhythms*. This book aspires to contemplate and comment on how culture functions crucially in the reality that is our lives: personal investment in the music is inseparable from its historicity and its vitality. Exposing these links and junctures, locating ourselves at these crossroads, reveals their absolute criticality and offers ways of understanding history and presence and art and politics.

This project investigates how African-American writers have used blues and jazz as conceptual reference points in their works in order to explore the aesthetics of ethnic identity-making processes. I concentrate on seven writers who engage in a literary project that seeks to represent, realize and/or articulate the complex histories of African-American experience. The legacy of trauma inherited from these narratives is problematized in the texts as much as their imaginative and aesthetic contexts are informed by it. It is through their turn to blues and jazz that the conflicting impulses are reconciled.[1] To theorize the political and aesthetic possibilities of a musical-literary sensibility, I incorporate the socio-musicological models laid out by Theodor W. Adorno regarding classical music into the foundation of my analysis. (Ironically, Adorno himself was a harsh critic of jazz; I discuss his criticisms as well as my own decision to use his work despite this, at further length below.)

Jazz in all its manifestations (musical but also cultural and political) emerged in the twentieth century and is clearly its product, spawned from the dramatic shifts in American culture and political ideology of the nineteenth century. A relatively new form and a highly fluid one, jazz embodies the culmination of historical trends, corresponding directly to the social and cultural shifts throughout the 1900s. Jazz, moreover, has always been linked to African-American experience and the construction of racial and ethnic identities. However, it is important to emphasize that, this link notwithstanding, jazz has never been divorced from white-American experience and is very much the result of the interaction of black and white individuals and communities. Throughout its

development, jazz has been critically affected by reviews of white critics, demands of white audiences and decision-making policies of white-run businesses, and has, moreover, for our purposes, been deeply influential on countless white-American authors.[2] And yet, much as jazz is and always has been intimately linked to the evolving definitions of race and ethnic identity in America, in general, it is its function within shifting notions of blackness in particular that concerns us here. It is for this reason (rather than any troubling presumed organic or biological affiliations) that I have selected only texts written by African-American writers for critical investigation in *Cross-Rhythms*.

Race

The genealogy of the terms *race* and *ethnicity* and the relationship between them is well established but warrants a brief run through. European ideas defining race through biology and/or language, and linking it with a hierarchically ordered cultural nationalism, shaped racial ideas in North America from the nineteenth century, specifically as they culminate in the American myth of a manifest destiny.[3] In the United States, this ideology of essentialist cultural nationhood was manipulated as a means of violent social division whose defining logic of exclusivity changed with the shifting explications of race. Indeed, a confused connection between race and language persisted, often serving as a clear racial marker. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the connection was already accepted as established fact and was transformed from a tool of inclusion, to one of exclusion. As will be seen in what follows, language becomes a central trope in African-American culture which, in the twentieth century, effectively inverts the racist denigrations based on perceived linguistic incompetence. Instead, linguistic differences tend to be privileged as a subversive vernacular that verifies ethnic authenticity.

Audrey Smedley, in her history of the development of racial thought in the United States, *Race and North America* (1993), defines *ethnicity* as 'all those traditions, customs, activities, beliefs, and practices that pertain to a particular group of people who see themselves and are seen by others as having distinct cultural features, a separate history, and a specific sociocultural identity' (30–1). 'Race,' in contrast, 'signifies rigidity and permanences of position / status within a ranking order that is based on what is believed to be the unalterable reality of innate biological differences' (32). In other words, *ethnicity* signifies learned behaviour and *race* denotes inherited genealogy.

Werner Sollors's study of ethnicity in contemporary American society, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (1986), offered new terms with which to formulate these concepts. Recognizing the tensions associated with a discussion of ethnicity, Sollors prefers to strip the expression of its emotional dressing, reconfiguring it to represent an interactive process between what he

calls *descent* and *consent*. *Descent* suggests an unassailable and essential self and social identification; *consent*, in contrast, signifies a conscious act of affiliation. Sollors suggests that modern ethnic identification can be traced back to the etymological roots of *ethnicity*. Etymologically, *ethnicity* derives from the Greek *ethnos*, or *ethnikos*, which means 'otherness'. Sollors describes this 'otherness' in religious terms where the so-called *other* represented the heathen, as set apart from the chosen people. There are countless examples of how this formulation of an elect which is posited against an antagonistic *other* (frequently clothed in religious rhetoric) has been applied in modern societies. As Sollors shows, this religious metaphor has been adopted in various ways by both white-American and African-American communities. Thus, this ethnic identification becomes a highly subjective and flexible process of categorization. Sollors recognizes that the apparently natural social fragmentation into identifiable groups – recognizable as ethnic in twentieth-century America – is transformed into a political and ideological tool through its ability to take into account the diversity it contains and still preserve a coherent category.

Contemporary efforts to recreate an ethnic self-definition (a phenomenon Sollors attributes to what he calls the third-generation ethnic Americans) is not a reversion to ethnic gestures – conflating ethnicity to a two-dimensional mask of traditions which can be symbolically recognized at will. Rather, it is a modern, dynamic and creative process which integrates contemporary black experience with American culture and the distinct ethnic heritage. In ever-shifting relation to the American social landscape, these neo-traditions (such as afro hairstyle) may be interpreted as reactions to what was seen as an American melting pot. In a marriage of the notions of descent and consent, the process of ethnic identification during the second half of the twentieth century has been redefined through the creation of new traditions and by appropriating distinctly American motifs. Thus the acceptance of America as a homeland, literally and imaginatively, in all its manifestations, has been central in reconceptualizing the process of ethnic identification.

Acknowledging a tradition of communal differentiation between white Americans and African Americans, and accepting the historical imperative to recognize the violence which has defined this differentiation, in this project I use both *race* and *ethnicity* as terms which strive to understand these processes. My own definitions of these expressions grow out of the ideas of Smedley, Sollors and others (including Reginald Horsman, Paul Gilroy, Kwame Appiah and Henry Louis Gates), and are specifically related to the historical, political and social contexts of the United States. With *race*, I refer to that socio-genetic concept: the artificially constructed idea that accepts certain genetic physical or behavioural attributes as a method of statically categorizing communities. This definition strains to bear the weight of miscegenation and interracial relationships that defy any notion of racial purity in America. Nevertheless, the idea of some intrinsic racial identity has been central to American ideologies. In the

absence of racial purity, the choice to associate with a particular cultural system is, in my usage, precisely what defines ethnic identity. *Ethnicity* involves a mixture of biological association (as defined by race) and conscious emotional, intellectual and cultural affiliation to a group.

The struggle to pin down this evasive notion has created a system of reference that acknowledges its own impossible referent. Ethnicity is effectively transformed into a metaphor which, in light of the endlessly changing point of reference, becomes privileged in itself. Thus, the importance of symbolism in ethnic definition points to the relation of modern ethnic identity to the aesthetic imagination of the ethnic group, art playing a defining role in the constant process of ethnic reconfiguration. Examining the manifestation of this process in African-American aesthetics suggests that a key method to reach, sustain and manifest a balance between consent and descent is precisely through art.

Jazz

The term *jazz*, whether referring to a musical style, a cultural phenomenon, an historical period, or a political and social feature, resists any simple definition. The name has been used in innumerably various ways: from the defining term of a very specific musical style within a particular geographical and historical moment, to a broad, even rhetorical, conceptualization of a culture that crosses centuries and oceans. Krin Gabbard, in his introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Jazz* (2002) has described the colourful and evasive histories of the word itself; its root associated with sources varying from the French *chaser* to the more risqué *jism*, possibly an allusion to its Storyville origins. Although difficult to pin down, Peter Townsend attempts to define the term and provides a detailed discussion of the varied uses and the vague boundaries of *jazz* in the preface to his perceptive book, *Jazz in American Culture* (2000). He is able to pick out key defining elements of the music:

> These are improvisation, rhythm, repertoire, and instrumental sound and technique. Where an instrumentalist is improvising on a certain repertoire, with a certain approach to rhythm, instrumental sound and technique, the result is likely to be what a majority of listeners would agree to call "jazz". (2–3)

In my own attempts to narrow this evasive term down to practical dimensions, Ludwig Wittgenstein's distinction between a search for the essence of meaning in words and the more useful notion of a *family* of meaning, a genealogy which enables communication, is illuminating (1968: sections 67, 108, 116–20). On this, Townsend writes: 'rather than an "essential" jazz that a definition should try to isolate, what there has been in actuality is a "family" of musical styles

closely related enough for one generic term to be applied to them all' (2000: 2). Certain traits of this family of styles can be traced back to the musical structures found in the African tribes whence the slaves were taken, though the impact on the history of jazz of the experience on the American continent and within the history of the United States cannot be underestimated.

From its inception, the story of jazz development has defied consensus, with musicologists and historiographers offering widely differing accounts and emphases in their descriptions of jazz.[4] Nevertheless, there are key moments in the development of jazz which are recognized as central in virtually all of these narratives. Whichever story we subscribe to they are all characterized by an ebb and flow of racial rhetoric, variously blurring or emphasizing distinctions between black and white. Indeed, generally setting itself as distinctly apart, the form itself of jazz remains fluid precisely as it variously appropriates, rejects or responds to European musical forms and traditions (increasingly, from the 1950s, jazz responds to traditions from other parts of the globe as well). Slave work-songs, which literally responded to the fact and experience of being black in America, can be identified as the first African-American musical form.[5] With the gradual Christianization of the slaves, the emerging religious songs became a second uniquely black-American musical form. These were generally more melodic than the earlier music, and manifested the complex relation of the slaves to their double cultural contexts. As LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) describes: 'Rhythmic syncopation, polyphony, and shifted accents, as well as the altered timbral qualities and diverse vibrato effects of African music were all used by the Negro to transform most of the "white hymns" into Negro spirituals' (1963: 47).

Work songs and early spirituals stand as the pivotal precursors to what became known as the blues, a rich and diverse form widely understood as related crucially to jazz, though the precise nature of that relation is endlessly debated. The themes of the early blues revolved around much more personal issues than previously explored in work songs or in spirituals, issues that were enabled by shifting personal and financial circumstances of many African Americans at the turn of the nineteenth century. As in the religious songs, these early blues demonstrated the confluence of divergent factors: the very first form of the blues 'utilized the structure of the early English ballad, and sometimes these songs were eight, ten or sixteen bars'. However, as will be elaborated in what follows, this was, as Jones points out, rapidly replaced by the 'patently non-Western form' of twelve-bar, three-line, AAB structure, the recognizable form of standard blues (62, 69). As the opportunities for individual expression increased, so did the freedom which exercised in the musical forms, further deepening the complexity of the relation to both cultural contexts (improved technologies of travel increased exposure to European instruments and rhythms, adding additional layers of influence).

With the growing autonomy at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a general but discernible shift away from European forms in the music, and

a concentrated musical experimentation emerged that eventually led to early but recognizable forms of jazz. Ragged notes of ragtime, the jubilant celebrations of dixieland or the increasingly formalized blues all crossed and re-crossed these racialized lines of culture as black subjects sought to articulate their changing experiences and realize their changing position in American society. The black marching bands of New Orleans at the turn of the century embodied a virtual microcosm of this development as they used European instruments, African rhythms and American themes to physically move through the town, avidly affirming both communal and individualized selves. In this early jazz form, the balance between forces that are seemingly external (European standards) and internal (African-American culture) is offset by the desire of the creating subject to explore the possibilities of expression. Thus, by using the forms of European music, the early jazz artists tested the boundaries of these structures, focusing on their subjective application. This subject is not necessarily the individual, but, particularly in this context, it becomes the communal subject functioning within the objectifying landscape of white European musical and physical space (the translation of this subject-object reformulation into spatial terms is apparent as the early jazz bands literally marched through the streets). Through these dynamic processes, the music actively provided a cohesive communal force, with early jazz fusing the divisive forces and representing one kind of balance within the community. Classic blues represents another, much broader one.

With the development of recording technologies, and with the increasing mobility and the growing urbanization of African Americans in the beginning of the twentieth century, what has been called *primitive blues* or *traditional blues*, segued into what is often referred to as *classic blues*. Unlike primitive blues, classic blues took on a much more formal and self-conscious form that recognized its own market value. As will be further described in Chapter 1, the classic blues successfully merged a vernacular and individualized form with the capital needs of a burgeoning music industry, and served to formalize an increasingly rich musical structure that remains influential today for countless styles.

Concomitant with the growing popularity of the classic blues was the popularization of ragtime, a form which soon became a favourite with white audiences and performers. Although it itself did not include improvisation, in its emphasis on syncopated rhythms and its blends of classical and marching band musics, ragtime, already popular at the end of the nineteenth century, set the framework for some of the musical features privileged in jazz to come. It was, moreover, itself directly related to traditions of minstrelsy and vaudeville, was an important catalyst in the professionalization of African-American music (as it was one of the first forms of quasi-black music to be published, performed and popularized with the early rags of the 1890s). While the highly popularized form soon became apparently formulaic, it is valuable to consider the actual complexity of

ragtime and its position in African-American culture. The white parody of black culture does not only seek to ridicule African Americans, but also signals the recognition of their possible humanity. Moreover, it is an exploration of the predetermined boundaries of white reality: by posing as black caricatures, white culture seeks to define itself through contrast. Topics which were generally taboo in the mainstream of American culture, primarily sexuality, could be explored in these forms. Furthermore, black performers who then imitated the white performers imitating themselves provided subtle but pointed criticism of white *in*authenticity, but also inevitably reflected back on their own modes of authenticity. These masks of masks reveal the dynamic relationships between preconfigured identities of an *other* and one's own exploration of self. In light of these racialized complexities, then, it becomes clear how while the material of the blues was generally unavailable to white America 'as if these materials were secret and obscure, and blues a kind of ethno-historic rite as basic as blood', jazz, on the other hand 'was a music capable of reflecting not only the Negro and a black America but a white America as well' (Jones, 1963: 148–9). Ragtime, then paid its dues to the demands of a mainly white audience, arguably taming the potency of its own aesthetic to suit the larger market.

By the 1930s there was a proliferation of different African-American musical voices, paying more or less regard to the demands of the market. Jazz bands that had grown to marching-band dimensions became smaller, the guitar and the violin gradually disappeared while the piano became a prominent fixture of jazz ensembles. Jelly Roll Morton was one of the first successful jazz pianists, with his 'Jelly Roll Blues' of 1915 arguably the first jazz composition to be published. Contentiously dubbed the 'Originator of Jazz', his style was an important influence on musicians such as James P. Johnson and other future greats of the stride piano – a pioneering jazz piano technique. Louis Armstrong, who began his career playing second cornet in King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in New Orleans, was one of the first musicians who fully experimented with the individual solo improvisation (rather than a group improvisation on a piece), a feature that soon became a definitive characteristic of jazz.

> The solo spoke singly of a collective music, and because of the emergence of the great soloists ([Louis] Armstrong, [Coleman] Hawkins, [Earl] Hines, [Jimmy] Harrison), even forced the great bands ([Fletcher] Henderson's, [Duke] Ellington's, and later [Count] Basie's) into wonderfully extended versions of that communal expression. (Jones, 1963: 158)

And yet we must always bear in mind the ebb and flow of racial politics that crucially affected the developments in jazz. What is considered the very first recording of jazz, for example, was that of the white Original Dixieland Jazz Band (O.D.J.B.). Although these young jazz artists had been heavily influenced

by the music of bands such as King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, not unlike the history of ragtime it was only their initial popularity in white America that paved the road for the African-American musicians.

Soon after the beginning of the famously dubbed Jazz Age of the 1920s, the highly popularized swing swept across the country capturing the public ear. Once again, this was led by white musicians, such as Benny Goodman – dubbed the 'King of Swing', and followed much the same pattern of market development and aesthetic commercialization as ragtime.[6] Swing was first and foremost a dance music and it played on structures inherited from plantation and urban African-American cultures (e.g. the cakewalk, the charleston and the breakaway), and familiar from the popular vaudeville and minstrel shows, creating a space of movement for African Americans and a subversive location of activity for white patrons stifled by the realities of World War I and the Depression Era. From the popular mode of swing, which – through its popular commercialization in the 1930s – brought about the increasing standardization of the jazz idiom, emerged some musical innovators who successfully generated ways of salvaging the creative impulse in jazz. Count Basie and Duke Ellington are two notable examples. Basie's big-band used a riff-solo structure that integrated the blues tradition of call and response and the more popular forms of the big bands in the Swing era. LeRoi Jones suggests that 'In a sense the riff-solo structure was a perfect adaptation of the old African antiphonal vocal music as well as the Afro-American work song and spiritual' (183). Along with musicians such as pianist-composer Duke Ellington and Lester Young, one of the first musicians to carve out an autonomous and specific role for the tenor saxophone in jazz, Count Basie began redefining the boundaries of jazz expression. These musicians of the 1930s laid the groundwork for the experimentation and exploration of music and identity in the 1940s, that came to be known as *bebop*.

A central factor in these later musical developments is the wider context of American financial and political history. In the 1930s, the dire economic situation of the Great Depression led to a dramatic decrease in the market appeal of blues. Moreover, the integrated war effort during World War II strengthened the patriotism within African-American communities and infused hopes of social and legal equality, making the blues a less acceptable form of expression in the wider market. Only in the 1940s, after the war, when it became clear that little had changed despite African-American participation in the war effort, did that hesitant conciliatory attitude began shifting. Thus the 1940s saw the beginnings of the Black Power movements and the more forceful search for ethnic self-definition.

Bebop marks the emergence of an African-American musical form that, through its aggressive autonomy from popular demands, paradoxically asserts its own ethnicizing force while rejecting its social functionality in favour of a (modernist) concentration on the aesthetic value of the music. Eric Lott writes that 'bebop was intimately if indirectly related to the militancy of its moment.

Militancy and music were undergirded by the same social facts; the music attempted to resolve at the level of style what the militancy combatted in the streets' (Lott, 1988: 599). In the late 1940s–early 1950s, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk and embodied a new generation of young musicians who began considering their music a serious art, subordinating the value of the performance to the value of expression. While the boppers of the 1940s were experimenters and innovators, however, it must be remembered that they were also unequivocally rooted in African-American musical tradition. Their music was a subjective exploration of form that tested the existing boundaries of jazz, and yet it intimately addressed the content of collective consciousness in which that subject functioned.

The emphasis on experimentalism reached its height with the development of free jazz, a jazz aesthetic that progressively shed all predetermined limitations and constraining factors. As the music became freer, alternative and arguably more palatable jazz styles proliferated in a by-now vast and highly diverse musical category. There seem to have always been parallel streams of jazz, one pursuing an individualizing, more introspective and self-conscious mode of expression, and the other veering towards increasing homogenization by seeking to accommodate the market forces. (A *very* rough schematic explication of this can be represented in the following pairings: New Orleans jazz – ragtime; classic blues – swing; bebop – Tin Pan Alley; free jazz – soul music.) In the second half of the twentieth century, however, jazz begins to splinter into countless streams: progressive jazz which was the recommercialization of the genre; cool jazz, or West Coast jazz; avant-garde modal jazz, pioneered by Miles Davis; funk and soul jazz; the re-emergence of Hard Bop with Horace Silver, Cannonball Adderley and Elvin Jones, for example, or East Coast jazz with Davis and John Coltrane who were also associated with funk and with free jazz; Third-stream jazz; fusion; and the progress of avant-garde, with such musicians as Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and Steve Lacy.

Adorno's jazz

In this book, I shall be focussing on four musical styles: classic blues, bebop, modal jazz and free jazz. Each of these styles signals a dramatic transition in the music, offering insight into the nature of jazz and its relation to its social and cultural contexts. The classic blues mark the first widespread acknowledgement of African-American aesthetic expression as a significant aspect of the American cultural landscape. Bebop became the first primarily African-American musical form to assert its own integrity as a force that empowered the subject within the realm of art, forging its positioning within the wider context of American aesthetics. Then, modal jazz, in its struggle to break free from inherited limitations, rejects the very notion of a totalizing scheme of authority, concentrating,

instead, on countermanding this notion by structuring its search along a shifting modal foundation. Finally, the innovations of free jazz explore the implications of rejecting the idea of history, as conventionally formulated, and – through its focus on spontaneity and collective improvisation – uncompromisingly demand an immediate engagement with its process of reinvention, reformulating the relation of the subject and the object: the relationship keeps being reinvented in the here-and-now of the piece. Unlike earlier forms of jazz where the subject tended to be subordinate to or patently liberated from the object, here a balance is constantly disturbed and re-established.

The shifting manifestations of a jazz aesthetic, dramatically different musical and conceptual approaches to the object-subject relationship that preserve recognizable and fundamental jazz attributes, can be successfully theorized using the work of Theodor W. Adorno. Although a vehement and unrelenting critic of jazz himself, his thorough and extensive exploration into the philosophy of music and its social and artistic expressions offers a surprisingly productive analytical medium with which to consider the far-reaching implications of jazz.

Theodor W. Adorno was a musician and a composer, but was probably better known as a musicologist, philosopher, sociologist and psychologist. What makes his work particularly useful for my purposes is his appropriation of music and all it entails as a manifestation of many of his social philosophies. He perceived music as a pure and autonomous microcosm containing the social forces at play on a larger scale in the community.[7] These forces were collated into a philosophy of aesthetics that sought to explain the relation of music and society.

In his fiercely critical article, 'On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening' (1938), Adorno wrote about the modern plight of the subject:

> Until the end of prehistory, the musical balance between partial stimulus and totality, between expression and synthesis, between the surface and the underlying, remains as unstable as the moments of balance between supply and demand in the capitalist economy. (32)

But in the twentieth century, which Adorno describes as capitalist times, he argues that '[i]mpulse, subjectivity and profanation, the old adversaries of materialistic alienation, now succumb to it' (32). In other words, if, before, a delicate balance between the part and the whole was successfully (if tenuously) sustained, today the subject succumbs to the totality of the whole, to the commercialization of the market. Jazz, as I will discuss shortly, is according to Adorno a case in point. Adorno, writing mainly in the 1930s and 1940s, collapses the various manifestations of the jazz aesthetic (the more and the less popular forms) into an evil embodiment of the Culture Industry and the culmination of the subjugating forces of twentieth-century mass culture. He claims that in the twentieth century not only is the subject so weakened as to be incapable of contending with the objective force of the collective, but the market has so

overpowered aesthetics as to prevent any real variety to choose from (with choice and variety being central prerequisites to the autonomy of the subject). The purity of the modern collective, which thus overpowers the individual, virtually disables that social critique which Adorno believes is essential for the truth-value of the artwork.

Positing a notion of truth-value as the primary quality by which music (or any subjective expression) becomes worthy of serious expression, Adorno specified a number of closely-related conditions for its fulfilment. The first demanded specificity: a musical piece needs to generate a truth relating to that particular work and not to simply reveal any generalized sweeping universalism. The second condition was that art be socially contextualized, stemming from the social, cultural and even political landscapes in which it was created. Thirdly, music needed to have a purpose, to fulfil some function. This concept of functionality, which seems to be an expression of Adorno's Marxism, excluded vapid, commercially generated, meaningless, popular forms from Adorno's consideration. Historicity was the fourth condition of the fulfilment of truth-value in art: pieces should not be expressions existing on an isolated temporal plane, but should have a development: a past, a present and a future (Paddison, 1996: 3). Finally, however, for Adorno, the ultimate aim of the art project was to refer the part back to the whole: understanding of the social forces for the sake of communicating them and the truths they entail. Jazz, according to Adorno, which is an output (or, he claims, the embodiment) of the modern collective forces, then, is unable to rise to the challenge of social critique and thus fails to contain that essential social truth through which art is realized.

Writing about jazz in no less than six different pieces, Adorno was a harsh and inflexible critic of jazz, an approach which warrants explication and demands contextualization.[8] Any response to Adorno's criticism must take into account the kind of music to which he himself was responding. In a rather surprising narrowness of perspective, Adorno's critique centrally addresses a very particular kind of German jazz and commercialized swing that was most popular in the late 1930s–50s. Adorno's reductionist approach does not recognize the diversity of jazz structures and remains blind to the subjectivizing possibilities inherent in the jazz form, finding no social or subjective integrity in this music that would make it relevant to his discussion on music and society.

Writing on the commodification of the arts and of social and cultural sensibilities, in 'On the fetish character' (1938), Adorno comments that 'Marx defines the fetish character of the commodity as the veneration of the thing made by oneself which, as exchange-value, simultaneously alienates itself from producer to consumer – "human beings"' (38). Although pertinent for some versions of jazz, Adorno's unqualified alignment of jazz with the fetish commodity offers a highly limiting response which wilfully ignores the social investment and individualizing processes inextricable from jazz aesthetics. Contrary to Adorno's own limiting definition of jazz as an unredeemably

commodified form and popular force, the subjectivity whence jazz emerges provides the humanizing solution to the problem of modern fetishization – re-focusing on the role of the producer as integral to the finished product.

Ironically, Adorno implicitly recognizes the individualizing history of jazz while ardently denying it. In his essay, 'Perennial fashion – jazz', Adorno posits popular art against what he calls authentic art; he writes that through its own establishment of jazz structures jazz ceases to offer space for spontaneous expression of a community, becoming instead a reified and increasingly hypostatized, hence ominously manipulative, form. 'Contrariness has changed into second-degree "smoothness" and the jazz-form of reaction has become so entrenched that an entire generation of youth hears only syncopations without being aware of the original conflict between it and the basic metre' (1953: 121). It is, he suggests, through this lack of awareness that the audience can be directed by the controlling force. Thus, this lament over what he deems to be an overarching and detrimental change in jazz suggests, through its very opposition, the possibility of an authentic and true expression of jazz.

Paradoxically, using Adorno's own conditions for truth value set out in 'On the fetish character', to evaluate the importance of jazz, serves to unpick Adorno's objections to it. Initially, the subjectivity of jazz and of each jazz moment ensures its specificity in time and content. Furthermore, the frequent reference to different musical pieces, and the continuous self-reflexivity of jazz – in the varied iterations of musical themes that underlie that music – fulfils the condition of historicity. These tendencies also contextualize the music by presuming a common basis of knowledge that exists in that environment. Moreover, the active participation of the jazz audience strengthens this common link by providing a cohesive expression representing the shared experience. The dynamic and fluid expression changes with performance, constantly creating a new here-and-now to which future musicians can refer.

Adorno suggests that the only way that light music and 'the usual commercial jazz' are able to thus exist popularly is through the inattentiveness of listeners (1938: 49). The wide appeal of jazz, he claims, comes from the formulaic dissonance and structure that is identified by the audience who mistake recognition for appeal. It also comes, he suggests, from mimicry: jazz adeptly imitates, or caricatures, fundamental human emotions, which, again, are easily recognized by the listener (53–4). Contrary to Adorno's condemnation, however, I argue that it is precisely the combination of recognition and repetition which infuses new meaning into the jazz expression.[9] By weaving together familiar and alien elements, jazz musicians disrupt the listening experience and force the listener out of that complacent notion of enjoyment so detrimental, Adorno decries, to musical authenticity. By manipulating those jazz structures which Adorno characterizes as formulaic, even through so basic an activity as reiteration, jazz interrupts the comfort of familiarity and relocates the music into a dialogical engagement between the immediate musical moment and the mediated past iterations.[10]

The literary texts which I consider here function in similar ways. Incorporating elements of jazz and blues into a literary aesthetic gives the reader the pleasure of recognition but one that demands an active engagement with the text. This is not the inattentive complacency of which Adorno complained but a deliberate challenge imposed on the reader's experience. Although outward looking through its external frame of reference, it necessarily draws the reader in, as the familiar elements are recontextualized. Even when those jazz structures inform the immediate experience of the work (as in, for example, Langston Hughes's blues poetry where the structure of the verse on the page is already suggestive of a blues inflection) the startling displacement demands an active engagement with the poetic structures, an attentive activity that redeems the text from the banality which Adorno condemns.[11]

Thus, despite his own aversion to jazz culture, in order to investigate these ethno-literary projects I have adopted some of the theoretical and sociological ideas developed by Adorno regarding Western art music. Although not necessarily an obvious choice, as will be demonstrated throughout *Cross-Rhythms* Adorno's work is remarkably useful as a paradigm which illuminates the complex relationship between society and aesthetics. Using his ideas as a prism with which to consider these African-American works serves to complicate the all-too-easy and highly dangerous binaries which so often function in racialized discourse. Using Adorno's European theoretical foundation as a basis for considering African-American literary texts, I realize that I risk prolonging those white-dominated power structures which heavily influenced black experiences and aesthetic sensibilities to begin with. This is a danger acknowledged and warned against by numerous literary critics who, with various degrees of urgency, have called for an African-American critical method for African-American aesthetic outputs.[12] However, rather than presuming to superimpose an alien conceptual model onto autonomous creative expression, I suggest that by consciously and carefully juxtaposing the two realms, the distance between them can be transformed into a productive and creative force. As has already been shown and will be further elaborated upon in the chapters to follow, reducing ethnic identity to the comprehensible and totalizing ideology of race in which two distinct and definable entities interact singly and simply is a stultifying and dangerous activity. When considering jazz constructs (musical, social or political) with relation to Adorno's rich philosophical writing, the dangers of such oppositions proffered by the ideology of race is demonstrated. My intent and my methodology, then, do not involve colonizing black art into subordination by white, European aesthetic ideals. Instead, I hope to illustrate how a cautious disassociation of each from the emotio-political burdens of history, in an attempt to see how they may (and indeed, do) work together, offers an enhanced understanding of each separately. Examining jazz through Adornian critical models implicitly acknowledges the inescapable influence and infiltration of so-called *whiteness* into *blackness* and vice versa, while also offering a new critical understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and society.

The writers

In *Cross-Rhythms,* I concentrate principally on the works of seven writers: James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Gayl Jones, Toni Morrison and Ishmael Reed. In the texts I have selected for analysis, these writers demonstrate the pervasiveness of jazz culture in African-American experience. Although they themselves were not musicians as such (with the exception of Ralph Ellison), each of the seven writers, in his or her distinctive fashion, explicitly embraced music as a fluid medium of literary expression, which successfully sounds political and ideological voices and attempts to capture aspects of African-American lived experience. Jazz becomes an aesthetic language, unique in its facility to engage in inter-disciplinary processes of African-American racial and ethnic identity-making.

There is a progression (conceptual rather than strictly chronological progression) in the representation of African-American identity in the texts of African-American writers. Richard Wright, a contemporary and mentor of James Baldwin (and then his rival), celebrated blackness as distinct from a more general *Americanness*, and promoted the idea of creating something altogether new to replace that identity imposed by the white community. In *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Paul Gilroy describes Wright's ideology as,

> [a] popular nationalism that [. . .] aspired to be more than an inverted image or "reflex expression" of the exclusionary power of institutionalised white supremacy. Wright's popular nationalism was the repository of a revolutionary, anti-capitalist politics potentially capable of transforming American society. (168)

In other words, Wright tried to create a black nationalism that attempted to dissociate itself from white exclusionary racism and to define itself in new terms, thus, in turn, transforming American society. While Wright's project of redefining his African-Americanness attempts to reject the relation to white Americanness, his goal is, as Gilroy intimates, to create a new role *within* American society. James Baldwin, on the other hand, considers in his writing the very complexities of white racism and its impact on African-American identity. In his work, Baldwin makes a distinction between black and white ethnicity, but he recognizes the interdependence of the one on the other, claiming that each can only clearly see itself in relation to the other.

Though he certainly acknowledges it, Baldwin is not always happy with his Western intellectual heritage. Realizing that African-American communities have largely shaped their identity within the constraints imposed on it by white supremacy, Baldwin comments that the tragedy of the black American is that he 'has accepted a theology that denies him life, that he admits the possibility of his being sub-human and feels constrained, therefore, to battle for his

humanity according to those brutal criteria bequeathed him at his birth' (1949: 23).[13] This struggle for self-assertion is precisely what Zora Neale Hurston, like Ralph Ellison after her, does not pursue: she refuses to question the existence (or extent) of black humanity. Paradoxically, in *Mules and Men*, her record of African-American folklore seems to belie this point. However, her almost colloquial register, using humour and dialect despite the academic nature of the study and her informal explanatory opening comments, demonstrate that Hurston's goal is not so much an effort to prove the legitimacy of African-American ethnic culture, but in a celebration of its diversity, to record and preserve it in her writing.

Baldwin, like Hurston and Ellison, as well as Toni Morrison, Gayl Jones, Ishmael Reed and countless other African-American writers, in his efforts to create an aesthetic through which a representation of African-American ethnic identity is viable, offers intimate criticism of that American cultural landscape which is embedded in his writing. His criticism is not the disdain and contempt of an outsider, but the shame and anger of one from within, all the more passionate because of his association. Moreover, he recognizes the dangers as the (white-generated) myths on which American ideologies are based and questions and chips away at the belief in and hope for the inevitability of American domestic success and wealth and global hegemony. In his preface to the collection, *Notes of a Native Son*, he laments: 'when these legends ["the myth of the happy darky and *Gone With the Wind*"] are attacked, as is happening now – all over a globe which has never been and never will be White – my countrymen become childishly vindictive and unutterably dangerous' (1984: xiv). Significantly, Baldwin first published this collection in 1955, immediately following the Korean War and a mid-point between the end of the Second World War and the Vietnam War. This was a time when the myth of American greatness was slowly beginning to lose its lustre. The harsh criticisms of America's role in the global sphere and of its domestic policies that were heard all over the United States a decade later in the late 1960s, saw their seeds sown during this period at the height of the Cold War and McCarthy era. By echoing the themes coursing through American intellectual life during that time, Baldwin asserts his own Americanness.

In 'Many Thousands Gone' (1951), Baldwin comments that, 'Negroes are Americans and their destiny is the country's destiny. They have no other experience besides their experience on this continent and it is an experience which cannot be rejected, which yet remains to be embraced' (42). By recognizing the importance of the American context to the African-American experience, Baldwin sets an example of how to begin to acknowledge such a problematic heritage:

The relationship of oppressed to oppressor, of master to slave, [. . .] is [not] motivated merely by hatred; it is also, literally and morally, a *blood* relationship,

perhaps the most profound reality of the American experience, and we can-
not begin to unlock it until we accept how very much it contains of the force
and anguish and terror of love. (42)

The only way Baldwin conceives of reconciling the painful past with the present
is by acknowledging that 'blood relationship' with the other components of
American society. (This recognition becomes a key motif repeated in African-
American literature.) This, however, means accepting a joint responsibility for
the present and for building the future, on the part of both the white and the
black communities. Furthermore, this process of self re-creation is only possible
with a combined and honest examination of the past. 'The time has come to
realize [sic] that the interracial drama acted out on the American continent
has not only created a new black man, it has created a new white man, too'
(Baldwin, 1953: 175).

In the trajectory of aesthetic representation of ethnicity, Ralph Ellison moves
beyond both Wright and Baldwin in his collection of essays, *Shadow and Act*
(1964). He dwells less on the issue of black and white on a socio-political and
cultural level, taking for granted that two such ethnic communities exist and
that they are interdependent, on at least some levels. Recognizing its inextrica-
bility from white American racialized conceptions, Ellison focuses on creating
an aesthetic code by which African-American ethnicity can be reflected. In
'Change the joke and slip the yoke', Ellison writes: 'My point is that the Negro
American writer is also an heir of the human experience which is literature,
and this might well be more important to him than his living [i.e. ethnic] folk
tradition' (58). Thus, he accepts that the Western white intellectual tradition
has an irrefutable presence in the intellectual heritage of African Americans,
suggesting that to see them as unaffected by this legacy denies an important
factor in their development.

Examining the works of Toni Morrison reveals a culmination of these
forces. Like Baldwin, Morrison recognizes America as the undeniable home-
land of her African-American subject. Like Ellison, her texts accept the
relationship between white and black Americanness as granted, while she
explores the expression of African-American identity through art. Pushing the
process further yet another stage, in an ironic echo of Wright, Morrison re-turns
her attention to capturing African-American experience and ethnicity – specifi-
cally as it is distinct from that of white Americans.

The stress on Americanness, and on the uniqueness and importance of
the American context for identifying African-American ethnic identity, is given
new meaning by the argument put forward in Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*.
Gilroy asserts a trans-national community, linking the black societies around
the world, primarily on the basis of a shared experience of displacement
and slavery. He suggests that as the world virtually became smaller, with techno-
logical developments enabling much easier interaction with other countries,

cultures, and ideas, the previously isolated communities began to interact, weaving the web of what he calls the black Atlantic. Gilroy writes about Richard Wright's experience in Europe, claiming that this experience opened his eyes to the links among the black diaspora. Baldwin, on the other hand, writes of his own time spent in Europe: this distance from his homeland gave him the detachment needed to understand that it was indeed his homeland. Baldwin's sojourn in Paris, his interaction there with Americans and with Africans, led him to the startling revelation that he is inestimably closer to the former than to the latter, with whom he had no real common ground of communication. 'They face each other, the Negro and the African, over a gulf of three hundred years [. . .] This alienation causes the Negro to recognise that he is a hybrid' (Baldwin, 1950: 122).

In discussing the crucial Americanness of Baldwin's writing (and that of these other writers) it is thus illuminating to consider Paul Gilroy's conceptualization of a black diaspora. Gilroy's idea redefines Americanness in a useful manner, transforming it into an arena of ever-changing identities. The national boundaries become a point of reference informed by transnational flow of ideas and influence, enriching in turn the American intellectual and cultural landscape. The reality of modern transglobal experience requires – as Gilroy seems to suggest – a new definition for those boundaries and a newly configured role for them in the creation of ethnic as well as political identity, and aesthetic imagination. Gilroy proposes the black Atlantic as a means for understanding the significance of self-imposed or enforced exile of African Americans as a desire to 'transcend the constraints of ethnicity' and national particularity. 'Whether their experience of exile is enforced or chosen, temporary or permanent, these intellectuals and activists, writers, speakers, poets, and artists repeatedly articulate a desire to escape the restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification, and sometimes even "race" itself' (19). And yet this transcendence demands a radical and violent shift in the terms by which one's self is defined and recognized – a shift not always possible. In fact, the impossibility of this quest, no matter how ideologically desirable, perhaps, demands a reconsideration of these national and ethnic identities, complicating their ideological character and emphasizing their experiential and cultural implications. It is through their relation to jazz that the writers with whom I am concerned here, struggle against the confines of political ideology, favouring instead a transgressive many-stranded approach.

and jazz

The role of jazz in the lives of the various writers is diverse but they all acknowledge the centrality of music in their aesthetic sensibilities. Zora Neale Hurston was a scholar of folk culture and engaged in an ongoing anthropological study of African-American vernacular. By immersing herself in the oral folklore and

in the music and of southern African Americans, Hurston attempted to capture and record those atextual elements that coloured that experience. The distinction between oral storytelling and the blues on which she concentrates is blurred through their parallel social roles; a phenomenon consciously incorporated by Gayl Jones into her fiction. Placing a blues singer as her protagonist in the novel *Corregidora*, Jones comments that, '[o]ne of the things that I was consciously concerned with was the technique from the oral storytelling tradition that could be used in writing. A story is told to someone in the same way when Ursa sings. She picks someone to sing to. The book has layers of storytelling' (Bell, 1979: 285). Thus, Jones intertwines the blues and the act of storytelling into the fabric of her own act of storytelling, firmly establishing the location of her novel in the blues tradition. Roseann P. Bell, her interviewer, regards this link as certain not only because of the figure of the blues singer which stands at the centre of the narrative but because '[Jones] is able to create an affirmation of life out of the harshness, cruelty, bitterness, despair, and degradation that has been so much a part of [. . .] Black reality' (284–5).

This affirmative and self-conscious literary use of the blues also appears in the poetry of Langston Hughes. He introduces a blues aesthetic into his own poetics as a cathartic and exuberant medium that allows him to celebrate African-American experience despite its hardships. Hughes was quite explicit about the relation of his poetry to the blues, writing in his autobiography, *The Big Sea*, that:

I tried to write poems like the songs they sang on Seventh Street [Washington DC] – gay songs, because you had to be gay or die; sad songs, because you couldn't help being sad sometimes. But gay or sad, you kept on going. Their songs – those of Seventh Street – had the pulse beat of the people who keep on going. (1940: 209)

The blues enable Hughes to participate in, and to reflect African-American experience in his poetry. This use of the music as a mode of collectivity, a means of social participation and individual engagement in a communal experience, is repeated in Hurston's vivid description of listening to a jazz performance with a white friend:

This orchestra grows rambunctious, rears on its hind legs and attacks the tonal veil with primitive fury [. . .] I follow those heathen, follow them exultingly. I dance wildly inside myself; I yell within, I whoop; I shake my assegai above my head [. . .] My pulse is throbbing like a war drum. I want to slaughter something – give pain, give death to what, I do not know. But the piece ends [. . .] I creep back slowly to the veneer we call civilization with the last tone and find the white friend sitting motionless in his seat, smoking calmly.

"Good music they have here," he remarks, drumming the table with his fingertips.

Music. The great blobs of purple and red emotion have not touched him [. . .] He is far away and I see him but dimly across the ocean and the continent that have fallen between us. He is so pale with his whiteness then and I am *so* colored. (1928: 154)

Hurston uses music as an instrument to portray difference in black and white experience and as a multilayered medium through which she engages with the different histories that inform her present. Revealing a vast experiential distance between herself and her friend, the narrator realizes an African mythological history, relives the violent unrest of more recent African-American history, and through the immediate experience of the music, she re-examines her present surroundings. Gayl Jones similarly considers the implications of music and oral storytelling on the patterns of time: '[p]erceptions of time are important in the oral storytelling tradition in the sense that you can make rapid transitions between one period and the next, sort of direct transitions' (Bell, 284–5). Thus, through the music, the linearity of time is disrupted and transcended as the reader/listener is directed outwards, back and forth in time, only to be pulled back into the text.

This explicit musical framework reappears in the work of James Baldwin, who was not a jazz musician, nor did he possess any clear knowledge of the specifics of the musical form (although, significantly, Baldwin's last published work is *A Lover's Question* (1986), an altogether neglected collaboration with the musicians David Linx and Pierre Van Dormael). He was, however, plainly interested in the mythologized trope of jazz.[14] In James Campbell's biography of Baldwin (1992), he quotes Baldwin's response to an interviewer's question regarding literary technique:

Baldwin eschewed comparison with other writers and chose to liken himself to a jazz musician and a blues singer: "I would like to think that some of the people who liked [Another Country] responded to it in the way they respond when Miles [Davis] and Ray [Charles] are blowing". (181)

Furthermore, in his powerful essay, 'The uses of the blues' (1964) Baldwin describes his relation to blues musicians as metaphoric, conflating his aesthetic with that of the blues, capturing a particular sensibility or rhythm that encapsulates African-American lived experience. In *James Baldwin Now* (1999), edited by Dwight A. McBride, Josh Kun writes on the significance of music to Baldwin and to his writing. He refers in particular to Baldwin's stay in Switzerland with his lover, Lucien Happersberger, when he reportedly took with him only his typewriter and some Bessie Smith records. It was in this setting that he was finally

able to complete *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, concluding the work of 8 years. As Kun writes,

> My interest in Baldwin lies here, in Baldwin as an active listener in a world of black sounds, an active interpreter of sound and music who throughout his life – to borrow (and misuse) a notion from Theodor Adorno – thought with his ears. For Baldwin, listening to and identifying with music – specifically, in the case I discuss here, the "classic blues" of Bessie Smith – was a way of confronting, voicing, and grappling with his sexual and racial identities: namely, the identificatory crossings of his queerness and his blackness. (308)[15]

Again, music becomes an instrument of belonging and a literary means for reconciling conflicting notions of self. As Kun emphasizes, this is not a passive, self-annihilating apathy critiqued by Adorno, but an active participatory engagement that realizes the subject.

Unlike the other authors about whom I am writing, Ralph Ellison was himself a serious musician. Although turning to literature at a young age, he concedes that his primary engagement with his own creative impulses was in fact through music. 'I regarded myself – in my most secret heart at least – a musician. This was the result, in part, of a complicated, semiconscious strategy of self-deception [. . .] writing was an acting-out, symbolically, of a choice which I dared not acknowledge' (1964: xi). Here, writing and music stand in opposition to one another, as mutually exclusive realms. This antagonism is overcome, however, as, significantly, the act of writing is depicted not only as the form of creative expression but itself a representation of subjective agency, a choice with critical implications for Ellison.

> Indeed, I repressed [this choice] beneath my old concern with music and my current involvement in the intense social and political activity which claimed so many of us who came of age during the thirties [. . .] At stake here, beyond the veil of consciousness, was the question of what seemed possible for me in terms of self-achievement, and linked to this was the question of what was the most desirable agency for defining myself. (xi)

Ellison's description of his own development into a writer depicts the close bond between the musical and the literary activities: they are both intimately linked as modes of expression. For Ellison, writing pulls together the self-defining and expressive power of music and the experiential and political reality of social existence. Ellison never abandoned his tie with music, and wrote countless jazz reviews and essays that, together with his fiction, incorporated his musical foundation into his literary aesthetic.[16]

Ishmael Reed's relation to music was formalized through trombone and violin lessons when he was young, and seems to characterize his own aesthetic

eclecticism and his ideological commitment. A founding member of the Umbra Writers Workshop since the 1960s, he has been closely aligned – socially, creatively and intellectually – with the cultural activism of the avant-garde artists. Describing his position within African-American intelligentsia, Robert Elliot Fox writes that he is 'more akin to George Clinton or Sun Ra than to Wynton Marsalis. Does this help us to place him within the black tradition? At the least, it forces us to relinquish any notion of "the" black tradition' (2001: 346). The use of a musical analogy to locate Reed's role in a black tradition that defies homogenous categorization reflects Reed's own use of music in his work. Jazz and blues (as well as R&B, Soul, and Rock n'Roll) seep into Reed's poetry, fiction, essays and performances, all of which tend to interweave not only musical but also visual elements, creating a veritable collage of effects. In a 1988 interview with Shamoon Zamir, Reed comments that 'Romare Bearden was a fan of mine and I was a fan of his, and also Betye Saar – they are collagists and they say I've been successful in doing collage in my work. And also musicians obviously feel that way about the rhythmic elements in my work' (1131). This emphasis on a multimedia creative expression is manifest in Reed's numerous live poetic collaborations with jazz musicians. These collaborative and collage expressions, together with Reed's prolific non-fictional battle against false categories show how Reed 'deliberately embrac[es] what amounts to an uncertainty principle that acknowledges "other" positions, myriad possibilities' (Fox, 346).

Not unlike Ellison or Reed, Toni Morrison too depicts the power of writing as a cohesive one that is able to merge and incorporate surrounding cultural sensibilities into a communicable and expressive form. The novel becomes, for Morrison, an urgent and necessary solution to what she regards as the diminishing exclusivity of musical ownership within black communities.

> For a long time, the art form that was healing for Black people was music. That music is no longer *exclusively* ours; we don't have exclusive rights to it. Other people sing it and play it; it is the mode of contemporary music everywhere. So another form has to take that place, and it seems to me that the novel is needed by African-Americans now in a way that it was not needed before – and it is following along the lines of the function of novels everywhere. We don't live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don't sit around and tell their children those classical, mythological archetypal stories that we heard years ago. But new information has got to get out, and there are several ways to do it. One is in the novel. (Morrison, 1984: 340)

Here Morrison illuminates some key factors regarding her use of jazz in her work. Primarily, by introducing the novel as a form which can replace music, her designation of music as fulfilling the key roles of healing and essential communication within a community demonstrates her confidence in the possibilities

of textuality, while reflecting on her choice to use jazz and blues in her own fiction. Furthermore, she determines a progression from music to text as part of a logical and productive momentum that keeps alive the cultural flow of information. The ways in which Morrison incorporates music into her writing are rarely straightforward (even in a novel such as *Jazz*, where only the *fact* of a link to music is made explicit, leaving the reader to identify the nature of this link). It is through the relationship of text to music that Morrison is able to capture the intangibility of aural experience in the materiality of her writing. In an interview with Christina Davis, Morrison comments on the necessity for a realisable aural quality in her writing:

> it also has to *sound* and if doesn't *sound* right . . . [. . .] The point is not to need the adverbs to say how it sounds but to have the sound of it in the sentence, and if it needs a lot of footnotes or editorial remarks or description in order to say how it sounded, then there's something wrong with it (Davis, 1988: 418).

Thus, her creative process consciously incorporates musical sensibilities into the written textures. In addition to this added dimension of her writing, the effect of introducing a jazz aesthetic into her fiction is to delay resolution and to preserve a momentum in her narrative.

> I think about what black writers do as having a quality of hunger and disturbance that never ends [. . .] Jazz always keeps you on the edge. There is no final chord. [. . .] And it agitates you. [. . .] There is something underneath them that is incomplete. There is always something else that you want from the music. I want my books to be like that – because I want that feeling of something held in reserve and the sense that there is more [. . .] They [the musicians] have the ability to make you want it, and remember the want (McKay, 1983: 411).

This resistance to what is inevitably the artificial sense of closure that Morrison associates with European art forms is reflected in her novels. Through their various relations to jazz the fiction denies the comfort of a linear and teleological trajectory that can be resolved. Instead, her novels become part of a process of constant renewal whereby history is revisited, rewritten and created anew through the shifting presence of the narrative.

Cross-rhythms

In its various musical manifestations then, jazz reflects the social, political, as well as aesthetic processes which surround its own development. Its centrality in African-American ethnic identity-making processes is directly linked to the

constraints imposed on more immediate modes of expression in African-American history. It not only contains but actively participates in the processes of socialization and subjectivization, individualization and liberation, which African-American communities and individuals have undertaken. Its reliance on signified allusions and metaphoric references and its initial position as musical *other* have enabled jazz to gradually chip away at the constraints of racism which have inscribed African-American creativity for so long. As jazz moves further and further away from any African-American exclusivity (one that has been more of a wilful privileging of origins than any absolute exclusion of white creativity in the jazz mode), its relation to ethnic identity becomes more and more complex.

There are clear analogies between changes in musical sensibilities within the jazz world and shifts in African-American literary aesthetics. Throughout the twentieth century, however, jazz has played a defining role in circumscribing these shifts, for, by its very nature, it stands as a unique counterpoint to its political and social contexts. Jazz engages directly with that paradoxical dialectic prescribed by Adorno, linking autonomy and social relevance: a work of art can only be socially true as it strives to achieve, contain and sustain, social autonomy. Jazz manifests the amorphousness, the variety, the sensuality and the ephemerality of surrounding socio-political and individualized forces, to which any verbal or material medium can only aspire. In other words, through its own transience and atextuality, and its complex and shifting approach to form, jazz reflects the material, intellectual and communal implications of racialized African-American experience.[17] This observation notwithstanding, my focus is first and foremost a literary one and this is fundamentally a literary project. It is precisely through the use of jazz, marrying the transitory and immediate experience of music with the mediated and grounded experience of text, that these writers interrupt a traditionally hypostatized notion of history, without rejecting that element of grounded continuity (implicated by this linear historical narrative) vital for any exploration of African-American experience.

Spanning the twentieth century and focusing on several authors, this project clearly adopts a broad, macrological perspective that enables me to identify and concentrate on microcosmic moments of transition within generalized trends. Rather than concentrating on a single writer or work, or working within a more limited temporal framework, I have preferred a broader sweep that avoids the hyper-specificity which the more limiting approach would necessitate. Exploring the works of seven writers across the century, enables the broader and more diverse perspective necessary for any clear understanding of the various literary uses of jazz.

Exploring the relationship between black fiction and blues and/or jazz music has, by now, an extensive scholarly history.[18] Although often widely varied in approach, this large body of scholarship has established a recognizable jazz discourse in literary analysis through which the uses and implications of these

links can be critically considered. The emerging prevalence of this multi-disciplinary discourse in critical readings of African-American literature enables an increasingly more subtle analysis that need not rely solely on explication but can explore the musical undertones of a text. Thus, for example, through such seminal works as Scott Saul, Steven C. Tracy on Langston Hughes; Houston Baker, Jr., Robert Hemenway and Henry Louis Gates, Jr on Zora Neale Hurston; Robert O'Meally, Horace Porter and James Harding, and David Yaffe on Ralph Ellison; Lars Eckstein, Jürgen E. Grandt, Anna Kérchy, Cat Moses, Alan Munton, Alan Rice and Andrew Scheiber on Toni Morrison, an harmonic orchestra of texts materializes. It is in this context that the centrality of music is revealed in novels where music may not play an immediately obvious role.

In *Cross-Rhythms*, I deliberately associate particular texts with specific trends in jazz (blues, bebop, modal jazz or free jazz). Nevertheless, it is not my suggestion that these texts are explicitly or rigidly linked to any particular moment in jazz. Indeed, there is a wide scholarship that dispenses with the specificities I have adopted, treating these with relation to a more general notion of jazz. On the other hand, there are scholars who have adopted different musical models for the same texts I have selected.[19] Furthermore, as will be self-evident, I have not applied discrete methodologies, effectively using each to varying degrees in all of the chapters.

While I have emphasized throughout the notion of a common cultural sensibility as the basis for a musical analysis of these texts, the main methodologies which I have implemented are as follows: discursive (Chapter 1), introducing new modes of discourse into the hackneyed discourse of race as a means of revitalizing notions of ethnicity and accepting responsibility for the implications of the past; dialectical (Chapter 2), complicating the binaries of traditional conceptions of race; structural (Chapter 3), demonstrating how the texts cannot be divorced from the wider cultural contexts and revealing the political, communal and aesthetic implications of this juxtaposition; and conceptual (Chapter 4), using an external medium as a theoretical basis for a radical shift in conceptualizing race. Demonstrating such widely varying ways in which these authors use jazz, and how to read the use of jazz in the wildly varied texts, I hope this work opens the way for a further pursuit in each.

In this book, I have adopted diverse analytical approaches to texts at least equally diverse, resisting the temptation for homogenization or simple categorization. Each one of the seven writers and the many musicians I discuss works to disrupt conventional stereotypes, subverting literary or musical expectations, and accepted systems of logic. My own choice to avoid a strictly chronological guiding principle reflects this aesthetic contestation pursued by the authors. Furthermore, I have not attempted to ensure parity in the number of texts I examine in each chapter, which ranges from eleven in the first to only two in the last. That the number of texts (and authors) examined decreases as the book progresses is in itself telling of the heightened recognition of diversity

(a diversity that struggles with the inevitable impulse for homogenization inherent in the history of race) within African-American literary creativity. That my final chapter is restricted to only one author is indicative not only of Toni Morrison's importance as a writer, but points to her unique (though not isolated) approach to language as fundamental to contemporary processes of ethnic identification.

In the first chapter, 'Blues notes: a discourse of race in the poetry of Langston Hughes, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston, and in *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones', I revisit the linguistic components of a racialized discourse and explore their manifestation in a blues reading of the texts. By establishing a discursive framework for analysis, one based on the economics of African-American experience, I examine the implications of blues sensibilities on these writers, as they inform these texts.

In the second chapter, 'Bebop spoken here: performativity in Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison's, I look at various notions of performativity and the ways in which ethnic identity has been determined by them. Examining how bebop manifests parallel performative functions, I explore the divisive, subversive and finally cohesive implications of this performative discourse. Informed by Adorno's work on Mahler and Berg, my analysis examines how Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962) and Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992a), through their subtle links with bebop, adopt an ironic stance to earlier literary and musical, but primarily racialized constructs.

In the third chapter, 'Modes of experience: modal jazz and the authority of experience in Ishmael's Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*', I examine different emphases in notions of ethnic identity that takes place in the middle of the twentieth century. Moving from the dynamic but potentially essentialist implications of performativity, these novels by Toni Morrison and Ishmael Reed explore choice – a choice that is founded upon the authority of experience – as a basis for ethnic identification. To understand these processes, I find that the concomitant musical innovations of modal jazz offer a particularly useful model for analysis. For this chapter I adopt a more somewhat more elaborately technical musical analysis than used elsewhere and, informed by Adorno's writing on serial music, I engage with structures of modal jazz as interpretive devices for the novels and their conceptions of ethnic identity.

In my final chapter, 'Free jazz: postracialism and collectivity in Morrison's "Recitatif" and *Paradise*', I explore how Toni Morrison pushes her exploration of ethnic identity-making processes into the realm of the language in which it is constructed, using free jazz as an aesthetic and conceptual framework for my analysis. This barely categorizable process of jazz exploration is a veritable assault on musical norms and confines in a search to realize new meanings in music. Similarly, in her novel *Paradise* (1997b), Toni Morrison refuses to submit

to the linguistic confines of construed racialism, demanding a critical engagement with the very medium in which these are constructed. Here, I introduce Adorno's 1961 essay, 'Vers une *Musique Informelle*', as a theoretical underpinning for understanding both free jazz and Morrison's novel. Adorno's notion of an informal music embodies the quintessential Adornian paradox, whereby an impossibility becomes realized precisely through an acceptance of the impossibility of its realization. Reflecting on the implications of a utopian form that is self-reflexive and defies an inherited syntactical or conceptual hierarchy (through parataxis and through a reinvention of language), Adorno's essay offers a particularly useful model through which Morrison's linguistic endeavour to reformulate the categories of race, may be realized.

Cross-Rhythms attempts to uncover the lasting impressions made by jazz on the imagination, creative output and social ideologies of these writers and to demonstrate how, despite the fluctuating interpretations and manifestations of ethnic identity in African-American communities and literature, these remain fundamentally American, rewriting America as the writers reposition themselves within their own community.

Chapter 1

Blues notes: a discourse of race in the poetry of Langston Hughes, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston and in *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones

Crazy Blues. St. Louis Blues. Rhapsody in Blue. Blues for Mister Charlie. Blue Moon. Blue Light. What did I do to be so Black and Blue? The Bluest Eye. Kind of Blue. Biloxi Blues. Reservation Blues. My Blue Heaven. Blue Note. China Blue. The blues offers a pervasive and familiar resource of images, sounds, idioms and moods. In this chapter I propose that this pervasiveness serves not to woefully dilute but to enrich the aesthetics with which it is engaged. The blues poetics I consider here are all the more powerful as the writers do not superimpose an external blues aesthetic onto their territory but reveal that it stands as the very foundation of that which they build. Since the first classic blues recording in 1920, the blues has become a veritable currency that trades in values of authenticity. Long associated with the vernacular in its purest or most romanticized senses, on one hand, but on the other a vernacular that has since come to be commodified, packaged and successfully marketed, the blues is inextricable from a discourse of authenticity, mechanisms of legitimacy that touch on identifications of race, class and gender. This notwithstanding, the blues remains a potent force of articulation and celebration, a force well-established by blues historians and one I propose to pursue in what follows.

To follow the sound of the blues, it is useful to recall the histories of African-America whence the music emerged. With Emancipation newly freed slaves were confronted with changing living conditions that allowed them, indeed forced them, to recreate the terms by which they lived. These terms took form in the most basic of personal needs as well as in larger social structures, with altogether different individual and communal identifications emerging. As LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) explains, music was a pivotal arena which reflected these changes:

The limited social and emotional alternatives of the work song could no longer contain the growing experience of this country that Negroes [sic] began to respond to. Also, the entrance of Negroes into the more complicated social

situation of self-reliance proposed multitudes of social and cultural problems that they never had to deal with as slaves. The music of the Negro began to reflect these social and cultural complexities and change (1963: 62).

What Jones has called *primitive blues*, that music which for the most part predates the kind of gradual homogenization which recording technology wrought, strove for a balance between the increasingly new environment and the traditions familiar from an African heritage, between the overwhelming constraints in society and the individual need for expression, between the slowly emerging demands of the musical form and the subjectivizing impulse, i.e. the need of an individual to understand himself as such and give expression to this understanding. (The idea of totalitarian constraints in society which stand opposed to individualistic impulses is taken from my discussion of Adorno in the Introduction and will be elaborated upon shortly.) In theoretical terms, the very form of call and response, inherited from West Africa and apparent as early as slave work songs and African-American spirituals, which in turn heavily influenced the structure of blues, can be reconfigured and understood as a struggle to balance the forces of the part and the whole. The shift from the primitive blues to classic blues reflects this struggle as the latter offers a formal culmination of precisely these vectors of change.

What has become known as the *classic blues* grew out of the three principal African-American musical forms during slavery and in its immediate aftermath: early traditional blues (*primitive blues*), work songs and spirituals. Mamie Smith's 1920 'Crazy Blues' marks the foray of the classic blues into recording technology and thus to popular standing. (That the recognition of a new development in music is identified with a technological activity and that it is initiated by a woman are both significant facts. I will discuss the role of gender and feminism in the blues and in the African-American communities at further length below.) With the gradual spread of recorded blues and eventually of radio, together with the increased mobility of African Americans at the turn of the century, classic blues attained a level of formalization previously absent from African-American musical forms. This, in turn, steadily linked the previously isolated communities, forming a nation-wide cultural network for African Americans. The influence of the recorded blues in the African-American communities is evidenced by the centrality of the phonograph in both rural and urban African-American homes.[1] This formalization came from the new professionalized status brought by the classic blues to musicians. Whereas earlier forms of the blues could be sung by anyone as and when the mood struck (with, of course, varying degrees of talent), the classic blues were performed and made popular primarily by professional artists. Thus, while early blues gave voice to a new and personal sense of independence, classic blues marked a shift from music as individual expression of experience, to a much more structured and professionalized entertainment form, a form that investigated the new relationship of that newly individualized self with changing communal identities.

The blues of the early decades of the twentieth century encompassed a series of conflicts that defined African-American ethnic identity-making processes but also begin to reflect new possibilities of social harmony. In his *Blues People* LeRoi Jones writes,

> Classic blues is called "classic" because it was the music that seemed to contain all the diverse and conflicting elements of Negro music, plus the smoother emotional appeal of the "performance." [. . .] It was, in effect, the perfect balance between the two worlds, and as such, it represented a clearly definable step by the Negro [. . .] into the mainstream of American society. Primitive blues [vs. Classical blues] had been almost a conscious expression of the Negro's *individuality* and equally important, his *separateness.* (1963: 86)

The tension between an African American's separateness and his or her integration into the broader context of American culture can be conceived of in three formulae: an opposition between the group and the individual, between urban and rural traditions and between art and nature. Jones makes a rather extreme distinction between these identities, claiming that '[c]lassic blues was entertainment and country blues, folklore' (105). In Ralph Ellison's collection of essays, *Shadow and Act*, Ellison qualifies Jones's conclusion: 'Jones makes a distinction between classic and country blues, the one being entertainment and the other folklore. But the distinction is false. Classic blues were both entertainment and a form of folklore' (256). Comparing other forms of so-called African-American music which were completely overtaken and defined by the popularized (that is, white dominant) taste (e.g. ragtime, dixieland and swing) to the classic blues reveals that the latter were hardly the purely commodified entertainment-oriented style that Jones intimates. In fact, arguably, the classic blues successfully achieved precisely that delicate and rare balance between folk representativeness and commercial considerations, neither significantly overpowering the other.

The tension between the old forms and the new forms, between a cultural and ethnic expression and a music catering to the commodified market consciousness, can also be seen in terms of a tension between nature and art. While the primitive blues developed spontaneously from the context of slavery and post-slavery, classic blues was a more conscious and artificial musical style. The style does not, however, need to be understood solely (if at all) as a deterioration or dilution of the supposedly more *authentic* forms of primitive blues. Classic blues did become a learnable form, consciously imitable by artists; however, it was the organic result of merging the traditional and the contemporary. Classic blues both formalized and revived traditional forms making them meaningful for changing African-American communities by infusing sounds of the surrounding urban landscape. As the market for the recorded blues expanded, the commercial demands imposed on the musical form became more compelling. A very delicate balance between the forces needed to be maintained.

Bessie Smith, for example, was famously initially rejected by Black Swan, the first black-owned record company, because her sound was deemed too gritty. In other words, her participation and immersion in a particular moment of African-American culture was judged to be socially threatening when this participation did not adhere to white standards and expectations, though all the while her allure (and thus the feasibility of being recorded at all) stems from precisely the same fact.

Billie Holiday is another performer who had to negotiate the terms of professional entertainment with her identity as a black woman. Holiday often sang highly commercial, Tin Pan Alley tunes which happily met the demands of the (white) market. And yet, it was her ability to transform the often vapid sentimental lyrics and banal tunes into meaningful blues songs with social and political implications that made her such a remarkable performer. With a subtle use of blues scales and notes, she infused the essence of the blues into the commercially-generated music, invoking the blues as a general aesthetic and life-force, rather than simply as a limiting technical musical form. Writing about Holiday's style and effect, Angela Davis comments that '[w]hen she transformed these sentimental love songs into works that would become jazz standards, she relocated them in a specifically African-American cultural tradition and simultaneously challenged the boundaries of that tradition' (1999: 165). Thus, Holiday reflected the shift of African-American communities into the broader (that is, whiter) culture, while preserving a quintessential blues identity. Holiday not only provided a link between white culture and black identity, but she created a window through which black communities could observe dominant white norms and values:

> Billie Holiday's songs were subversive in that they offered special and privileged insights to black people about the dominant culture [. . .] she boldly entered the domain of white love as it filtered through the commodified images and market strategies of Tin Pan Alley. (171)

With these social, historical, cultural and musical conditions of the development of classic blues in mind, we can turn to Langston Hughes and his blues poetry, and to the blues sensibilities which characterize Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and which pervade Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* (1975). To explore the blues content of these texts and its implications, I adapt a method used by Houston Baker Jr. in *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (1984), where he conceives of the blues as establishing a discursive framework in which to interpret African-American literature. Angela Davis proposes a similar project in her *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*. The tension between individual creativity and commercial demands plays a particularly important role in the history of African-American women and in their participation in the blues. The economic terms with which Baker rewrites

African-American history are put into new perspective in light of Davis's insight-ful work. Willie Dixon, a blues musician and songwriter, has claimed that 'the blues began in the Garden of Eden. Man had the blues because there were no women around. Because man was blue and lonesome, God made women, and there has been the blues, ever since'.[2] This patronizing, male-dominated conception of the blues is one which Angela Davis shatters. Writing about the roles played by Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday in African-American society and in the musical tradition, Davis shows how the blues form and business gave African-American women a voice, a mirror to reflect their experience, a crutch to support them as they live it, and a goal to aspire to. By establishing key components of a black-feminist discourse, Davis illuminates and infuses new meaning into the blues. Thus, rereading the works of Hughes, Hurston and G. Jones through the systems of language set out by Baker and Davis offers new interpretations and reveals new truths about African-American experience conveyed in the texts.

The importance of this methodology is illuminated by a consideration of the part-whole construct of an artwork and the inherent sociality of tonal Classicism, conceptualized by Theodor W. Adorno. Focusing primarily on Beethoven's oeuvre, Adorno depicts the sonata-form as a unique form within which a near-utopian and delicate balance of the part and the whole is reached and sustained. This balance is attained through a privileging of the whole – defined as a process, rather than a hypostatized state. Classicism becomes defined by a total unity. The individual and society exist in an ideal state of interconnectivity between functionally different elements, where there exists a carefully sustained harmony between subject and object. For Adorno these are first and foremost musical elements, but then, crucially and inextricably, human ones.[3] This harmony, Adorno observes and laments, becomes gradually disrupted in the nineteenth century through the severance of the two and the dissolution of the organism into the object. The elements that compose the whole become effectively empty of meaning outside the context of that process of composition. Furthermore, the unified whole, that resulting process which defines the nature of the parts, is in itself inconceivable as autonomous from its own motion, its own nature as process. In *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), Adorno writes that Beethoven 'faced the antinomy of the universal and the particular by quali-tatively neutralizing the particular':

> In foundering, the particular elements dissolve into each other and deter-mine the form through the process of their foundering. In Beethoven the particular is and is not an impulse toward the whole, something that only in the whole becomes what it is, yet in itself tends toward the relative indeter-minateness of basic tonal relations and toward amorphousness. If one hears or reads his extremely articulated music closely enough, it resembles a *continuum of nothing*. The tour de force of each of his great works is [. . .]

in that the totality of nothing determines itself as a totality of being (My emphasis. 185).

Thus, to stave off the threat of formlessness, of nothingness, the elements must be related to the whole. In sociological terms, the process of individuation (which is that impulse away from the whole) must be socialized (re-turned towards society) in order to avoid dissolving in a self-annihilating abstraction. The parts interact to create a *something*, a development (themselves identical with that development) which defines their historicity:

> If the artwork is nothing fixed and definitive in itself, but something in motion, then its immanent temporality is communicated to its parts and whole in such a fashion that their relation develops in time and that they are capable of cancelling this relation. If artworks are alive in history by virtue of their own processual character, they are also able to perish in it. (178)

Thus, artworks (as motion) are defined by and dependent on their own historicity. In other words, according to Adorno, in order to avoid the hypostatizing and totalizing whole on one hand, and the empty amorphousness of the autonomous part on the other, the elements must be socialized in an interaction that privileges the whole as a self-defining process of the parts, over time. It is only through this dynamic and teleological development that the artwork will sustain historical weight.

The relevance of Adorno's model to the blues lies in an arguably parallel part-whole structure which, in the blues as in the Beethoven sonata, demands a socializing process to offset the individuation impulse, and to locate the music historically. The terms I propose to use to illuminate the blues aesthetic on which these texts are built, and to consider the implications of this influence, become the defining components of the discursive process of analytical composition. By shifting the focus of analysis onto new conceptual and semantic terms, specifically, terms taken from an economic realm (economically gendered and also a gendered economy), a new way of conceiving of African-American experience emerges. Relating these elements to the whole, to the overbearing economic impulse that defines them, the blues meaning and social and aesthetic relevance of these works emerges.

Blues notes

Houston Baker Jr.'s *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* elaborates the blues as a mode of discourse: through its content and language, specifically its economic references and implications, the blues are able to recreate and (re)interpret history and reality; that is, past and present. He shows how elements

of the blues have been reinscribed into African-American literature, and thus changed the discourse of history. In these ideas, Baker recalls Roland Barthes's 'The Discourse on History' (1981) in which the latter describes History, or historical discourse, as an irreconcilable paradox. In his essay, Barthes claims that history only occurs in the moment of action. The necessarily secondary act of the historian is, at best, a linguistic representation of the original series of events. The attempt of the historian and the willingness of the reader to collapse the distance between the referent (the 'History', i.e. the narrative) and the signified (the 'history', i.e. the events being narrated) presumes that history outside of narration exists and yet cannot eliminate this gap between the story being told and the act of telling. 'The fact can only have a linguistic existence, as a term in a discourse, and yet it is exactly as if this existence were merely the "copy", purely and simply, of another existence situated in the extra structural domain of the "real"' (8) – a real that cannot be reproduced. He goes on to write that 'History from now on is no longer the real, but the intelligible'. In other words, according to Barthes the very terms used to narrate history determine the nature of that history, through the meaning created. For Adorno, it is through this intelligibility that history becomes human. The elements that compose the whole (e.g. society, music, the realized individual) do so and thus avoid collapsing into objectified static structures, precisely by producing meaning.[4] Thus, it is the capacity to produce meaning that ensures that crucial and dynamic difference between elements as well as the total interconnectivity both between them and outside them.

What I propose to do for the remainder of this chapter is to establish terms with which this meaning is mediated and thus to reveal the underpinnings of this interconnectivity and of the functional difference between the elements. This process becomes central in blues narratives of African-American history, as portrayed in the works by such authors as Hurston, Hughes and G. Jones, as their texts establish the blues as a central discursive framework, and the measure of their intelligibility locates the ethnic boundaries drawn by their texts. The centrality of expression to the intelligibility of history leads directly to Baker's analytical descent to the level of phrases – what Barthes called 'units of content' – in his analysis of African-American history. 'What one derives from linguistic, historical facts, therefore, is not reality, but *meaning*. And meaning is always contingent upon the figurative, semantic resources available to us as readers, viewers, or auditors' (Baker, 1984: 22). Thus, following Baker (via Adorno), it is my purpose to identify key terms of analysis, blues notes, that will negotiate the classical part-whole processes as they enable a clearer understanding of a literary use of the blues.

Baker's 1984 study suggests that the widely accepted history narrating African-American experience needs drastic revising, a revision he embarked on but one that is no less vital today. To define his project, Baker refers to

'tropological thought' as the means by which he will be able to change the historical reality.

> Tropological thought is a discursive mode that employs unfamiliar (or exotic) figures to qualify what is deemed "traditional" in a given discourse [and is] designed to incorporate into reality phenomena to which traditional historiography generally denies the status "real". The end of a tropological enterprise is the alteration of reality itself. (28)

In particular, Baker considers the socio-historical, as well as literary, ramifications of 'commercial deportation' and 'economics of slavery' as fundamental discursive components. Taking his analysis as a model, I will be tracing four fundamental terms as my blues notes: the *Economics of Slavery*; the *Economics of Reproduction*: within which I identify a 'consumerable subject' an 'artist-audience dynamic', and 'repetition' as three primary components; *Commercial Mobility*; and *Signifying*.

Economics of slavery

Baker identifies the economics of slavery as a primary motivator that 'promoted the dehumanizing plunder of African labor, [while] also produc[ing] a corollary southern mythology of the ruling class. The primary features of this mythology were "patriarchy" and "economic paternalism"' (27). Baker consolidates his economic perspective and African-American creative expression within his new historical discourse:

> A survey of images of Afro-American dwellings demonstrates the effect of tropological thought in defining the economics of slavery [. . .] The nonmonetary, "mythical" dimensions that arise from the size and arrangements of black homes are supplied by an Afro-American expressiveness that can be succinctly denoted as "blues". (29–30)

Baker's analysis illustrates how an analytical prism of economics finds its voice in the blues. Applying these terms to literature, Baker shows the relevance of economics to African-American experience and then to creative expression. Since Baker there have been numerous cultural, literary and historical studies of the blues. In addition to – and in many ways circumscribed by – Baker's critical work, Angela Davis's work on blues feminisms and Adam Gussow's 2002 study on the intimate violence incorporated into blues aesthetics and lives, together offer insightful and powerful readings of the blues as a social text, precisely in the manner set out by Adorno's model of authentic art (that is, art which successfully critiques those social forces within which it functions).

Initially examining the role of these terms in the early slave-narratives, Baker explores how the economics of a situation change in relation to the location and gender of the narrator/protagonist. The conception of the slave-woman within slavery was never divorced from the recognition of her ability to have children. Considering the economics of slavery in Adornian terms, then, we can begin to see the threat this structure poses to that balanced wholeness of classicism through its privileging of the object over the subject (that subject violently denied its subjectivity through commodification). This commodification of a woman's procreative capabilities and the protagonist's self-redress through a narratological creativity is a central structural process in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*.

Janie, Hurston's memorable protagonist, has been identified as a blueswoman par excellence, as has her story been convincingly and powerfully read as a blues text.[5] This notwithstanding, it is fruitful to pursue the analysis within this frame of economic reference and as a process of individuation, in the Adornian sense. In what Maria V. Johnson has cogently described as an AA'B blues progression, Janie's three marriages have important financial implications and albeit they leave her childless, the novel is importantly resolved as she bears her blues song. And yet, a fact often overlooked in critical analysis of Janie's narrative is the financial independence which enables her journey. In a disturbing echo of the economics of slavery, this independence is dearly acquired at the price of her subjectivity, a subjectivity that is both gendered and eroticized. Albeit with good intentions in mind, Janie's grandmother effectively sells her to Logan Killicks, her first husband. 'Heah you is wid de onliest organ in town, amongst colored folks, in you' parlor. Got a house bought and paid for and sixty acres uh land right on de big road [. . .] and you come worryin' me 'bout love' (22). Hoping to provide her granddaughter with the material lifestyle previously unavailable to African Americans, Nanny ignores and thus perpetuates the emotional sacrifice of the slave economy. In Janie's second marriage, these dynamics are repeated as Janie soon learns to divide herself, carefully hiding her emotional and creative self beneath an exteriority designed by her husband, Jody Starks, and stipulated by his perception of her role as 'Mrs Mayor'. Telling of this pattern is Janie's enforced barrenness: in addition to being childless, Janie is forbidden from participating in the imaginative storytelling activities that could have alleviated her deep isolation. Forced to trade the sexualized promise of the blossoming pear tree for the possession of 40 acres of land, or to be silently displayed on the stultifying Mayor's porch, Janie's escape with Tea Cake to the 'muck' is a passionate search for a renewed subject voice.

The legacy of the slave economy and of the economy of gender which characterize Janie's blues narrative also defines Ursa Corregidora's blues in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*. The protagonist, Ursa (also called U.C.), is the direct descendent of this economy: her great-grandfather, Corregidora (who is also her

grandfather, for he incestuously impregnated his daughter), was a Portuguese slave-owner who prostituted his female slaves for profit, explicitly equating their sexuality with their economic value:

> The Portuguese who bought slaves paid attention only to the genitals.
>   Cause tha's all they do to you, was feel up on you down between your legs see what kind of genitals you had, either so you could breed well, or make a good whore. (54, 127)

The legacy of this sexualized economy directly informs U.C.'s own sexuality and her life as a blues singer. Having been named after and raised on the stories of Corregidora, U.C. (as is, the reader learns, her mother Correy before her) is unable to move beyond this obscene hate-love pattern of relating to men. Violently objectified through the personal and sexual prostitution of slavery, U.C.'s great-grandmother and grandmother are forced to relinquish all representation of self as subject, turning instead to the image of Corregidora. His portrait, the object representation, becomes the sole repository of their subject. Stealing a picture of him as a reminder of the face of evil, the two women devote their lives to this image, telling the story of their history to new generations of Corregidora women. The devastating effects of this process become clear as the lives of the two women after Corregidora become centred around him. With an unsettlingly ambivalent objectivity that removes their suffering to the outskirts of the narrative, the women tell the stories of their abuse through a focus on Corregidora:

> He was a big strapping man then [. . .] He looked like one a them coal Creek Indians but if you said he looked like an Indian he'd get mad and beat you. Yeah, I remember the day he took me out of the field. They had coffee there. Some places they had cane and then others cotton and tobacco like up here. [. . .] He would take me hisself first and said he was breaking me in. Then he started bringing other men and they would give me money and I had to give it over to him. Yeah, he had a stroke or something and that's what turned his foot outside. (11)

Stripped of any real examination of the effect of her story on herself, U.C.'s great-grandmother and then her grandmother are spiritually impoverished by the economy which quite literally defined them. To stave off the emotional bankruptcy, each new generation of woman is meant to add her portion of the story:

> My great-grandmama told my grandmama the part she lived through that my grandmama didn't live through and my grandmama told my mama what they

both lived through and my mama told me what they all lived through and we were suppose to pass it down like that from generation to generation so we'd never forget. (9)

U.C.'s turn to the blues is what perpetuates this pattern of telling but also of possession by and finally freedom from the man. The act of storytelling (through oral stories and through the blues) is not simply a keeping alive of that history. Through its urgent invocation to never forget, the process of narration also becomes a cathartic mechanism whereby the women take on unprecedented agency, if not yet subjectivity. Recognizing this perverse process, Martin, U.C.'s father, breaks an unspoken rule and gives voice to the question: 'How much was hate for Corregidora and how much was love' (131).

Through their repeated narrations, the older Corregidora women struggle to shake loose their demon yet distressingly keep holding on. Ursa reverses this pattern with her blues; her version of the history she has inherited becomes a sellable commodity through which she acquires her love. The question of ownership becomes complicated however, as she rapidly loses control under the gaze of Mutt Thomas, her husband. Initially attracted by her blues, it is then through them – through participation (or refusal thereof) in a blues call and response and repetitions – that he reclaims his own authority in ways explicitly aligning him with Corregidora himself.[6] He verbally reduces her to a composite of sexualized objects of which he claims ownership: My pussy. My ass. My little gold piece. Moreover, he literally threatens to sell her in an auction. His need to possess her initially denies her the subject role which her blues had first allowed. Left physically barren after a fall provoked by Mutt's jealousy, Ursa is unable to 'make generations,' unable thus to fulfil that destiny dictated by her mothers. Ursa's blues are reinvested with her struggle for financial but more importantly, narratorial autonomy. Her narrative is repeatedly interrupted by interjecting voices and tales, a pattern of disruption that gradually abates as she finally attains this freedom through the blues narrative itself. Shifting into a much more immediate narrative voice at the final section of the novel, using a direct address to the reader/audience, Ursa achieves that reconciliation which Hurston's Janie sought as well: one that marries her agency with her subjective (creative as well as sexual) autonomy.

This reconciliation becomes a rare moment of cohesion with the intertwined blues duet between Ursa and Mutt:

"I don't want a kind of woman that hurt you," he said.
"Then you don't want me."
"I don't want a kind of woman that hurt you."
"Then you don't want me."
"I don't want a kind of woman that hurt you."
"Then you don't want me."

He shook me till I fell against him crying. "I don't want a kind of man that'll
    hurt me neither," I said.
He held me tight.

<div align="right">(185)</div>

The tightness of the embrace reflects an equal exchange. Their earlier love
exacted the price of her subject as Mutt denied her the subjectivizing possib-
ilities of creativity – both her music and bearing children – in a language of
ownership. The years apart have enabled Ursa to follow her impulse of individ-
uation, but this leaves her solitary and her song incomplete. Mutt and Ursa
must now renegotiate the terms of their love as a complex AB-AB-AB which
interweaves their two voices that remain resolutely separate, until the resolving
C lines of their embrace.

The economy of slavery thus exemplifies the most extreme possibility of
a subject's objectification: its absolute commodification. The pervasiveness of
this legacy is apparent in the process of individuation apparent in early African-
American creative expressions, and in the shifting nature of collectivities and
communities. Recalling Adorno's construct of the socializing force of an art-
work which strives for a balance that evades the 'continuum of nothing,' the
blues and these blues texts strive for a parallel balance.

Women's blues offered a possibility of sisterhood among urban working-class
African-American women. Voicing very personal experiences that were shared
by many women in the community enabled a cohesiveness that eased the com-
munal dispersal exacerbated by the migration North, the growing urbanization
and the gradual intra-communal class divisions. As Davis writes, '[t]he partici-
patory character of the blues affirms women's community without negating
individual feelings' (1999: 57), a relationship that provides the balance of clas-
sical individuation which ensures restorative historicity. This is a balance which
evades the dissolution of the subject, the indeterminedness and amorphous-
ness, and establishes that exchange mirrored in Mutt and Ursa's and in Janie
and Pheoby's blues duets.

By singing about the drudgery of domestic work, imprisonment, poverty, pros-
titution, eviction, homelessness and racism, women's blues painted a painfully
vivid picture of female urban African-American experience. The recognition
and self-awareness reflected in the women's blues and subsequently imposed on
audiences (both female and male) amplified the African-American female voice.

Women's blues, specifically, celebrated and valorized black working-class life
while simultaneously contesting patriarchal assumptions about women's
place both in the dominant culture and within African-American communi-
ties [. . .] women's blues helped to construct an aesthetic community that
affirmed women's capacities in domains assumed to be the prerogatives of
males, such as sexuality and travel (120).

This cohesiveness derived from the blues not only identified a community to itself but drew aesthetic and communicative borders, marking the communalism to outsiders as well. The music, by its very nature, eluded direct interpretation and contained layers of meaning rendered indecipherable to outsiders. The blues was an insider's truth, creating, distinguishing and strengthening the group's identity. This power of the blues is not without its ironies considering that the blues person herself can be perceived as thrice the outsider: excluded once by the white culture that belittled and misunderstood the blues, twice by the black middle class that rejected the form as representative and 'low class', and thrice by the church – the community's locus of authority. And yet, as can be seen by the sheer volume of recorded blues sold in the early decades of the twentieth century (to say nothing of the pervasiveness of earlier and non-recorded blues), the message of the blues was heard by a significant majority of African-America.

Herein lies a paradox, one addressed albeit differently by both Baker and Adorno. As the objectifying commodification enacted by the economics of slavery becomes the individualizing blues song which reaffirms the viability of the subject, so, arguably, does the commodification of the blues then revert back to the object at the subject's expense. For Adorno, the risk to the subject is nearly unbearable as the market forces obviate the liberating possibilities of art. Baker's persuasive resolution to this opposition between the demands of the commercial market and individual creativity suggests that, as we see in Janie's marriages, financial security is necessary to enable a gradual detachment from the collective and concomitant exploration of individuality. '[A]ll Afro-American creativity is conditioned by (and constitutes a component of) a historical discourse which privileges certain economic terms' (38–9). This framework based on the economics of a blues ideology can be usefully extended to expose layers of meaning in the poetry of Langston Hughes.

Hughes's poem, 'Negro' (1922), for example, lists the identities which the 'Negro' has taken on throughout history alongside an ongoing search for a true sense of self:

> I am a Negro:
>   Black as the night is black,
>   Black like the depths of my Africa.
>
> I've been a slave:
>   Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean.
>   I brushed the boots of Washington.
>
> I've been a worker:
>   Under my hand the pyramids arose.
>   I made mortar for the Woolworth Building.

I've been a singer:
    All the way from Africa to Georgia
    I carried my sorrow songs.
    I made ragtime.

I've been a victim:
    The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo.
    They lynch me still in Mississippi.

I am a Negro:
    Black as the night is black,
    Black like the depths of my Africa.

(24)

This poem traces the history of the 'Negro' which spans the centuries and the world. The logic determining the order of the narrator's various incarnations is not simply a chronological order linking the stanzas. Rather, it is an economically determined logic to which Baker's economic discourse is immediately relevant. Tracing the stages through which the 'Negro' traversed, from the slave to the worker to the singer, illuminates the economic undercurrent in the poem and in history. It is commercial deportation which took the narrator out of the depths of his Africa and into the early settlements in America. And it is the economic (as well as social) environment which took him out of the plantations in Virginia ('Washington') into the city of New York where he could work, helping to build one of the monuments to the new commercial age of America ('Woolworth Building').[7] Economics have been one of the primary catalysts of African-American history. It is only in the first decades of the twentieth century, generally at the same time when 'Negro' was written, that economic self-sufficiency adequate to explore their own history, meaningfully and effectively, collectively and individually, becomes a viable possibility in African American communities.

In light of an imposed functioning economy of slavery, Baker effectively rewrites the Adornian claim that under the demands of capitalist commodification (i.e. the capitalist popularization of art), social truth-value and subjective expression are necessarily sacrificed. For Baker, commodification is an integral, if not defining, part of African-American experience and hence inextricable from African-American creativity. Through the shifting manifestations of the economy of slavery in post-slavery twentieth century, a new term emerges that combines within it the aftermath of the slave economy and the consumerist realities of the twentieth century: the *economics of reproduction.* In his scholarly analysis of contemporary African-American ethnic identity and cultural creativity, *In the Break* (2003) Fred Moten regards *blackness* as culturally produced performativity, a constant improvisation that defines an essential notion of self, and he examines the aesthetic implications of this production that is largely defined by mass culture.

Economics of reproduction

Reconsidering the Marxian role of the commodity in terms of African-American history and with particular focus on the slave narratives, Fred Moten writes that '[w]hat is sounded through [Frederick] Douglass is a theory of value – an objective and objectional, productive and reproductive ontology – whose primitive axiom is that commodities speak' (2003: 10–1). In particular, Moten is interested in the non-linguistic utterance, the primal scream 'where shriek turns speech turns song' (22):

> If we return again and again to a certain passion, a passionate response to passionate utterance, horn-voice-horn over percussion, a protest, an objection, it is because it is more than another violent scene of subjection too terrible to pass on; it is the ongoing performance, the prefigurative scene of a (re)appropriation – the deconstruction and reconstruction, the improvisational recording and revaluation – of value, of the theory of value, of the theories of value. It's the ongoing event of an antiorigin and an anteorigin, replay and reverb of an impossible natal occasion, the performance of the birth and rebirth of a new science, a phylogenetic fantasy that (dis)establishes genesis, the reproduction of blackness in and as (the)reproduction of black performances(s). (14)

Although Moten is primarily concerned with the violently passionate, non-verbal shrieks of, for example, Aunt Hester in Douglass's slave-narrative, or of Abbey Lincoln, the avant-garde jazz singer, his methodology, which links primal passion (which he describes as 'pain alloyed with pleasure') to exchange-value and then these to articulation, constructs an economy of reproduction which illuminates the use of the blues in history and in literature.

Introducing the notion of reproduction – reproduction both in its manufactured and progenitive senses – into a blues discourse, necessarily includes the linked notions of product/object (consumerable and reproducible), as well as the process of production, and the value of productivity. By incorporating these linguistic associations into an economy of reproduction, the tension between the commodified objectification of slavery and its link to biological productivity and aesthetic creativity, which defines the economy of slavery, gains a new dimension composed of three central implications: the process and construct of a consumerable subject, repetition and reiteration and the relation of the commodity to the market. If the economy of slavery can be seen as a privileging of the object, giving impetus to subject realization of the individual, then within all three elements of the economy of reproduction the disruption to that Adornian classical totality comes from the reverse process. We see here an emphasis on subjectivity, a creativity and realization of the individual, and accordingly a critical impulse to move back to a holistic regard to society.

Love for sale: consumerable subject

In the Harlem Renaissance, that burst of cultural creativity that served as one of the social backdrops in the formative years of classic blues, the tradition of minstrelsy took on new forms as African-American performed identities became explicitly commodified in a resurgence of variety shows, vaudeville and cabarets. Primitivist ethnic stereotyping was given new license in the 1920s as marketable commodities, on one hand, while a system of patronage began to sponsor and support black creativity and scholarship (under regulated and sometimes constricting aesthetic sensibilities), on the other.[8] In the blues, the notion of a consumable subject translates initially to the countless first-person blues personae adopted by the singer/poet. The stream of identities which are immediately individual and personal but also universal and recognizable is transformed within the economy of reproduction into a process within which the very multiplicity becomes the specifying, identity-making medium.

In Hughes's poem 'Negro', already discussed, the narrator's process of self-definition traces his history through action: what he did, rather than who he was. The cause and the conclusion of this process is how he finally identifies himself: 'I am a Negro'. The conclusion, stated in the present tense, with which Hughes opens and closes this poem, is the culmination of this multiplicity of commodified activity: his experiences as an African, as a slave, as a worker, a singer and finally a victim, are all functions of the economy of labour and capital. The first-person singular pronoun 'I' dominates the inflection of the poem, and it is reformulated, reproduced, through the process of improvised identities, and ultimately defined by the pervasive mention of the 'Negro' with which Hughes begins and ends the poem.

In his blues poetry, Hughes meticulously incorporates blues structures while investing his own literary ingenuity into the poems. The carefully constructed structure, language, imagery and rhythm of the poems succeed in creating the effect of genuine blues texts. Simultaneously, the richness of the poem's construction sets it apart from that folk tradition and effectively and intellectually reflects on it. As discussed in my introduction, Hughes was quite deliberate in his use of the blues as a medium for poetry. This reveals a crucial paradox of Hughes's position, a position from which he analyses the very tradition in which he participates. The success of Hughes's poetry confirms his own location within this cultural context, rather than setting him as an outsider who would transform the blues into an imitable spectacle. He is both the collector of the blues and the blues singer, revealing an alternate version of the commodified subject, that is, that individuated self which becomes paradoxically objectified through the economy of its reproduction.[9] This becomes complicated by the necessary textuality of the manifestly oral form. Even more crucially, the difficulty of this position is that it could easily render Hughes virtually

incapable of maintaining a foothold in either of the two realms, becoming alienated from the folk culture which he is trying to explore while being incapable of fully grasping those cultural traditions which he is trying to capture.[10]

One of the principal techniques that Hughes uses in order to relieve the tension that arises from the juxtaposition of two arguably conflicting roles of blues musician and academic blues critic is 'ethnopoetics'. Steven C. Tracy, who writes about ethnopoetics in terms of Hughes's poetry, defines it as follows:

> an ethnopoetic type of rendering of an oral performance – we can "hear" the singer emphasizing these words [. . .] is a literary use of typography in a traditional blues stanza, but [. . .] the literary and the oral coincide, with no violence done to either one. (2001: 162)

By giving weight to the orality of the blues in his poetry, Hughes establishes a delicate balance between the musical medium from which he extracts his material and the textual medium of his poetry. A parallel can be drawn between Hughes's double role as a blues musician and blues collector, and his double-medium technique, combining orality and textuality.

Tracy's choice of terminology is significantly revealing. His decision to refer to this technique as *ethnopoetics* rather than, say, *audiopoetics* to refer to the incorporation of oral elements into the written text suggests an aesthetic specificity relating to African-American identification. This cultural specificity can be recognized most obviously in the inflections of dialect of many of Hughes's poems, and also in the careful rhythms, the use of imagery and subtle references that contain culturally specific associations. (While Hughes did not generally use terminology that deliberately contained a culturally exclusive sub-text which was unattainable to a white audience, much of the symbolic, structural and linguistic foundations for his poetry were clearly born out of a specifically African-American cultural experience.)

This double voice (the insider/outsider as well as the oral/textual duality) can be considered a reformulation of W. E. B. Du Bois's idea of double-consciousness which moved between Africa and Europe in its understanding of African-Americanism. Modified into an intra-racial doubleness, it is by embedding elements of the oral traditions of the blues and those predating the blues into his poetry that Hughes acknowledges this double voice. Rather than try and avoid or reconcile the tension, he celebrates and preserves the complex positioning of African-American culture and ethnic identity in the larger American context. There are a number of poems in which this concept of ethnopoetics becomes evident. In 'Trumpet Player' (1949), Hughes carefully incorporates blues structures into a grounded textual form. The poem is founded on a 12-bar blues, built of five four-line stanzas with three beats (bars) to each line, and a final couplet. By means of line breaks, rhythm changes,

stress alternations and a single italicized word: *fine*, Hughes plays with the distinctions and expectations of the literary or the musical form:

> The Negro
> With the trumpet at his lips
> Has dark moons of weariness
> Beneath his eyes
> Where the smoldering memory
> Of slave ships
> Blazed to the crack of whips
> About his thighs.
> [. . .]
> The Negro
> With the trumpet at his lips
> Whose jacket
> Has a *fine* one-button roll,
> Does not know
> Upon what riff the music slips
> Its hypodermic needle
> To his soul—
> But softly
> As the tune comes from his throat
> Trouble
> Mellows to a golden note.
>   (338, Lines: 1–8, 33–44)

Following the stress placed by the initial line breaks of each stanza, we can condense the poem as follows: 'The Negro [. . .] The Negro [. . .] The music [. . .] Desire [. . .] The Negro [. . .] But softly'. Hughes gives us a blues repetition of 'The Negro' where he asserts an equation between this series of nouns: an object black man to music and to desire, and then destabilizes it through the ghost adverb clause 'But softly' which serves to create both motion and tone, a positive but veritably intangible subject. This move becomes even more pronounced when we notice the syntactical structure of the poem. In the five descriptive stanzas motion is subdued: blazing whips smoulder in weary memory, vibrant hair is tamed down, fire is made liquid and ecstasy is distilled. It is only with the final couplet that this dreamlike stasis slowly clears into motion, in the shifted pace of the lines as well as in their content. The blues emerging from the trumpet player's throat is the only active element as its needle *slips*, the tune *comes* and trouble *mellows*. Thus the poem turns in on itself as it reflects that which it relates, conflating the poet with the trumpet player, the poem with the blues. There is a risk here for artists as they participate in what has become

a popular and commercially attractive medium and for Hughes as he taps into the medium, a risk of inauthenticity, in the Adornian sense. The aesthetic creation teeters on the edge of social irrelevance as it manipulates forms that in their conventional privileging of the subject begin to deny this subject any true freedom. However, by recognizing this risk, turning the art in on itself the interconnective balance of the parts is re-established, the unity of the piece restored and the stultifying stasis averted. Moreover, tracing the stresses of the lines in the poem reveals a shifting pattern of two-one beats across the text, creating a subversive rhythm that too belies the static abstractness of the Negro.

Tracy elucidates his definition of ethnopoetics, that individuating textuality of the blues poetry, as he describes the process of revision and rewriting which Hughes undertook when he published and republished his poetry. Moreover, ethnopoetics as a technique become further evident in a discussion of Hughes's 'Reverie on Harlem River' (1942). Here, Hughes reproduces the structure of the eight-bar blues: although the first two lines in the first and last stanzas are virtually identical, the second line in the final stanza is given dramatic emphasis by being divided visually on the page into three separated phrases:

> Down on the Harlem River:
>   Two a.m.
>   Midnight!
> By your self!
> Lawd, I wish I could die—
> But who would miss me if I left?
>   (263; Lines 9–14)

Dividing what appeared as one stream of thought, in the first stanza, into three separate statements, emphasized by exclamation marks and then followed by the explicative 'Lawd', slows down the rhythm of the poem, allowing each phrase to carry the weight of this emphasis. The complete loneliness and isolation of the narrator is subtly countered by the dramatic effects and the verbal exclamations in the poem. In precisely that classical impulse of the hyperindividual subject towards the social, it is by integrating oral elements into the poem that essentially forces it back into a social realm: the poem which becomes nearly audible implies an audience which hears the narrator's lament. In answer to his closing question: 'But who would miss me if I left?', should the narrator fall silent this invisible yet tangibly present audience would miss him. Hughes does not simply privilege the written work and try to enrich it through musical references. Rather, his blues poetry entwines the two media so that both the aural and the visual aspects of the poem coexist inextricably. This close relationship recurs in Hughes's poetry and depicts that economy of reproduction which defines the blues texts; by inhabiting multiple identities, represented

ethnopoetically, the implied author is able to negotiate the individualized experience of the blues with the consumerable universality which is one of preconditions of the form's existence.

These dualities are no less pervasive in the writings and in the experiences of Zora Neale Hurston. To overcome the social alienation Hurston experienced from the folk culture which she researches upon returning from her studies to Florida, Hurston immersed herself in the culture she was observing. In an interview with Alan Lomax in 1935, Lomax asks Hurston how she collects the folksongs. She answers that to collect them she simply learns them:

> I just get in a crowd with the people and if they're singing and I listen as best I can and I start to joining in with a phrase or two [. . .] And then I keep on until I learn all the songs, all the verses, and then I sing them back to the people until they tell me that I can sing them just like them. And then I take part [. . .] And then I carry it in my memory. (O'Meally, 1996: 10)

Thus, Hurston recognizes and manipulates her double identification in order to reap the benefits from both worlds. Through her movement from one role to the other, Hurston is able to capture and reproduce the songs she learns. The process can be seen in Hurston's 1942 short story, 'Story in Harlem Slang'. Here, Hurston writes about Jelly, a zoot-suit wearing, slang-talking pimp (which, Hurston explains, in 'Harlemese' is more akin to being a male-prostitute than a 'procurer for immoral purposes'). The significance of this story to the economy of reproduction in a blues discourse is twofold. Written almost entirely in slang, Hurston appends a 'Glossary of Harlem Slang', where she provides definitions for words that signify insider knowledge of African-American culture. Thus Hurston's provision of two linguistic keys demonstrates her own ability to cross both worlds and reproduce the one for the other in an economically sound manner. This delicate balance of identities is reinforced in the history of the story itself which was initially titled 'Now You Cookin' with Gas' and included allusions to black-on-white violence which were then edited out in the published form. Furthermore, the early unedited supplemental glossary, 'Harlem Slanguage', was longer than the published one, was not alphabetized, and included within it many more explicitly sexual definitions. These choices made as the story moved to the more public sphere, demonstrate the practical realities of the economy of reproduction which must be included in any account of blues history.

Say it again: repetition

The role of repetition in the blues is paramount, and features centrally in the structure of the blues. Hughes introduces the pattern of reiteration into his blues poems, creating largely the same effect present in the music. As seen in the poems already discussed, recurring lines emphasize the event or emotion

being described. This process slows down the narrative, capturing the psycho-
logical tendency to isolate and concentrate upon the cause of trouble, in song.
Moreover, there is always a subtle shift in the effect from the first utterance to
that in its repetition in the second. Not only does the blues singer/poet often
slightly modify the initial statement but the effect on the audience changes
by virtue of the repetition: the reader has already heard this statement before,
creating a dialectical pattern whereby the statement is both new and familiar
(a pattern enhanced by the frequent use of standard blues lines or formula),
creating what can be seen as an anti-history.[11] The story being related is always
already familiar even when it is new (through the design of the blues which
leads the audience/reader to expect its repetition, thus altering the experience
of the first utterance as well as the second). In his consideration of the repro-
duction of blackness through endless improvised performatives, in a passage
already quoted, Fred Moten describes this reproduction as, 'the ongoing event
of an antiorigin and an anteorigin, replay and reverb of an impossible natal
occasion' (14). It is the parallel subversive anti-historicism of the blues which
replicates but simultaneously resists the economy of reproduction in which it
must exist. The call and response of the blues are the event which, by offering
catharsis and solace to the singer and listener through its combination of indi-
viduated creativity and commodified communality (through its role as a mode
of reproduction), echoes and defies an origin of African-American experience.
This defiance enables an empowering revision of the role of history.

The mechanisms by which these blues reflect processes of individuation
can be seen to parallel Adorno's construct of the *developing variation*, whereby
'a musical element subjects itself to logical dynamic change while simultane-
ously retaining its original identity, thus overcoming the contradiction between
identity and nonidentity [. . .] signify[ing] for Adorno the attainment of the
musico-historical moment when individual freedom finally overtakes externally
given order as the most manifest governing principle of objectively existing
structures' (Subotnik, 1976: 21).[12] The variation then becomes part of an
antiphonal structure where the relation of the two parts becomes central in
dissolving the hierarchy of origins in historical narratives.

The anti-historical design takes on a slightly different form from the antipho-
nal structures in Hughes, in G. Jones's *Corregidora*. As in the blues and in
Hughes's blues poems, in Jones's novel an emphasis is placed on repetition
and on the effects of repetition. Ursa grows up hearing the stories of her grand-
and great-grandmother, repeated again and again. Through the repetition,
however, the process becomes more than storytelling, more than passing on
tales of a past which has ended. Rather, Ursa, like her mother before her, liter-
ally loses herself in her tale, conflating her sense of self and her own narrative
with those of her ancestors through the process of narration. Jones's narrative
is interspersed with dreams and reported speech which are intermingled with
imaginary conversations Ursa has with Mutt, her first husband, with Tadpole, her
second, and with herself. The cumulative effect of these repeated inter-narratives

reproduces the anti-historical pattern of repetition in the blues; Ursa's sense of self becomes conflated with these histories. The climax of this process occurs in the sexual act through which Ursa suddenly understands the means by which her great-grandmother undermined the destructive objectification that defined her existence within the economy of slavery. In a single sexual act, her great-grandmother was able to temporarily reverse the terms of objectification, becoming the agent of her own identification and reconfiguring Corregidora's sexuality and his existence to a point of utmost vulnerability.

> A moment of pleasure and excruciating pain at the same time [. . .] It was like I didn't know how much was me and Mutt and how much was Great Gram and Corregidora – like Mama when she had started talking like Great Gram. (184)

Through the repetition, which re-enacts both the pleasure and the pain (this is Moten's 'pain alloyed with pleasure' and it is the blues), Ursa thus finds resolution, one that aligns her with her predecessors but also enables her to realize herself. This realization, the individuated reproduction of the past, as for the singer of the blues, enables Ursa to finally renegotiate her position in this historical economy and take on a new self. This self, like the narrator in Hughes's 'Negro', both precedes her self-realizing blues song and results from it.

Commercial mobility

Among the terms Houston Baker proposes with which to read African-American literature (rewriting the historical discourse along an economic path) is *commercial deportation*, which focuses on the economic implications of the Middle Passage and their consequences through history. Baker's phrase alludes to reflections on home and homelessness, migration, immigration and all kinds of mobility: for escape, for pursuit, for self-improvement, for employment (as on the railroad or for the travelling bluesman/woman) and for leisure. Each one of these associations is tinged with a commercial motivation. Using Baker's work on *commercial deportation* as a basis, I propose *commercial mobility* as an alternative term that recognizes these concepts inextricable from the relation of African-American history to land and to mobility.

Angela Davis, in her examination of central themes of the blues, focuses on ways in which the collective identity of slavery culture made the musical forms possible in slavery inadequate to express the processes of individuation that defined post-slavery life. Davis writes specifically about three major changes in the lives of the ex-slaves following emancipation:

1. there was no longer a proscription on free individual travel; 2. education was now a realizable goal for individual men and women; 3. sexuality could

be explored freely by individuals who now could enter into autonomously chosen personal relationships. The new blues consciousness was shaped by and gave expression to at least two of these three transformations: travel and sexuality. (1999: 8)

The exhilaration of free mobility and its sexual implications (lovers could now be chosen but could also be left or replaced) is qualified by the new commercial demands imposed on the freed slaves and free African Americans. Commenting on how, 'the content of the blues verse had become much changed from the strictly extemporized lyrics of the shouts and hollers' LeRoi Jones gives an example of the impact of the new economic situation on the blues: '"I never had to have no money befo'/And now they want it everywhere I go"' (1963: 65). Here the blues singer is confronted with the price of his mobility, a price that eventually leaves him stranded or on the run. A tiny list of common blues titles already demonstrates the preoccupation with space, place and movement: 'Sweet Home Chicago', 'Ramblin' On My Mind', 'Cross Road Blues', 'Walkin' Blues', 'Travelling Riverside Blues', 'St. Louis Blues', 'Beale Street Mama', 'Gulf Coast Blues', 'Baby Won't You Please Come Home', 'Blues Everywhere'. This mobility then is a movement of the subject within and outside pre-existing collectivities: asserting his autonomy yet paradoxically doing so by communicating to a society.

In his analysis of slave narratives, Baker attributes the trope of mobility to masculine narratives associating immobility, rather, to the stories of women's experience in slavery. Both Hurston and Gayl Jones (as well as Hughes in many of his female-narrated poems) countermand this thematic assignation. In fact, as Angela Davis demonstrates, the paradigm of mobility versus immobility was utilized in women's blues to reformulate the male prescription of mobility-as-escape. 'When the blues extricated [the theme of] travel from the spirituals's religious context and rearticulated it as an overarching blues theme, representations of desire took on the dimensions of actuality. In the process, travel was individualized, secularized, and sexualized' (71). The travelling woman, or that persona within the blues, inevitably needed to redefine her femininity, and her means of subsistence – both physical and emotional – needed to be re-established. Her mobility was put to various thematic uses in the blues: emancipation, liberation, equality, new identity, search for a new home, return home (to the South after disillusionment with the North) and travel as stability – adopting the mobility as a new way of life. The blues were also a source of stability for the people who actually travelled: growing out of the South and Southern culture, the blues eased the alienation of the new urban communities.

These travel themes and their use in women's blues function centrally in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Janie is constantly on the move. She first appears in the novel walking into the town on foot. Her journey towards a vocalized self-realization takes her from grandmother's house to Killicks's lonely sixty acres.

She walks out of his kitchen and into the carriage with Jody Starks. A train
and buggy ride later and Janie finds herself in Eatonville, where she remains
immobile and mute for nearly twenty years before she puts on her blue dress
and boards the train to meet Tea Cake in Jacksonville. Together they go to the
Everglades and, after his death, Janie returns to Eatonville. Janie's travels mani-
fest the different experiences explored in the blues. Her search for the fulfilment
of the promise of the blossoming pear tree jolt her into a mobility still socially
atypical, as can be seen by the criticizing gossip that surrounds Janie's departure
to follow Tea Cake. It is significant that although Janie remained in Eatonville
for almost twenty years, the length of time is de-emphasized. Hurston allots
virtually identical space of narration for the twenty years in Eatonville and the
year and some spent in the Everglades. This chronological imbalance empha-
sizes the importance of the latter setting to Janie's development. Her time with
Tea Cake, living and working on the land, provided the fertile soil for her
growth and spiritual coming of age.[13]

A number of Hughes's poems reflect his recognition of this new freedom of
mobility that women enjoyed. The man left by his lover is a prominent theme
in the blues and there are numerous examples of this in Hughes's poetry.
'Lover's Return' (1928) echoes Bessie Smith's 'Sam Jones's Blues', in which the
woman whose lover left her rejects him upon his return. In Hughes's 'Ballad of
the Gypsy' (1942), the narrator has paid a fortune-teller to find out when his
lover will come back to him. In one particularly evocative poem, 'Homecom-
ing' (1949), Hughes considers the emptiness of being left behind:

> I went back in the alley
> And I opened up my door.
> All her clothes was gone:
> She wasn't home no more.
> I pulled back the covers,
> I made down the bed.
> A *whole* lot of room
> Was the only thing I had.
>   (352)

It is unclear if the man has returned from a day's work to discover that his lover
has left or whether he has returned from a longer escapade (reminiscent of
Sam Jones in Bessie Smith's song), but his home space becomes configured
here in the paradoxical juxtaposition of ownership and absence that demon-
strate the shifting gender roles and their relation to space.

Hughes's 'Bound No'th Blues' (1926) is a classic example of the blues theme
surrounding male mobility, typifying the northward movement of many black
Americans at the turn of the century.

Goin' down the road, Lawd,
Goin' down the road.
Down the road, Lawd,
Way, way down the road.
Got to find somebody
To help me carry this load.
[. . .]
Road, road, road, O!
Road, road…road…road, road!
Road, road, road, O!
On the no'thern road.
These Mississippi towns ain't
Fit fer a hoppin' toad.
(76; Lines: 1–6; 19–24)

'Bound No'th Blues' paints a vivid image of the migrant bluesman who is walking North in search of a new life. The word *road* is repeated eighteen times in the poem and, together with the ellipses, graphically represents the seeming endlessness of the journey. Moreover, the exclamatory 'O!' rings out almost audibly from the poem, emphasizing both the hardship and the loneliness of the traveller on his journey. However, the repetition, together with the humorous closing couplet, adds a melodramatic sense of pathos. This reminds the reader that despite the difficulties the traveller encounters on his way, the journey is undertaken by choice and he anticipates a positive end, while simultaneously alerting us to the stylized nature and self-consciousness of the blues narrative. This use of humour is a pervasive result of the process of signifying, which I will discuss at length below.

Hughes's poem 'Could Be' (1949) further illustrates some of the implications of this new historical moment, showing how mobility was inextricable from the commercial realm which invaded all aspects of African-American experience.

Could be Hastings Street,
Or Lenox Avenue,
Could be 18th & Vine
And still be true.
Could be 5th & Mound
Could be Rampart:
When you pawned my watch
You pawned my heart.

Could be you love me,
Could be that you don't.

Might be that you'll come back,
Like as not you won't.

Hastings Street is weary,
Also Lenox Avenue.
Any place is dreary
Without my watch and you.
                                    (366)

The narrator defines love in terms of money and money in terms of love; by conflating the two the speaker suggests a new social order and a cultural imagination in which these are of primary importance. The new freedom to travel and the economic promise of the North in the beginning of the twentieth century lured men and women to be constantly on the move in search of new and better opportunities. The reality of urban life belied the promise of economic abundance. The precise location of this blues narrative is immaterial, and in fact, unmemorable: 'Lenox Avenue or Hastings Street'. (And yet, simultaneously it is paramount and pervasive, as all the locations listed are or have been key centres of African-American life and culture: Detroit, Harlem, Kansas City and New Orleans.) Impelled by the new freedom to move and by the promise of success that lures him, the narrator moves around incessantly in search of emotional and financial (here inextricably linked) recompense.

Moreover, the ambiguity of location in this poem, the repetition of place, links it to the blues (here, perhaps less immediately obvious than in some of Hughes's more explicit blues poems). 'Could Be' is simultaneously the tale of a single wanderer and a non-specific story that repeats itself across America, recognizing a shared experience which provides a sense of community that resists the loneliness in the blues. The singer/narrator thus locates himself in the song/poem and through this location inscribes his voice in the American landscape. (Finally, the narrator's vagueness as to whether or not his lover will come back is effectively a recognition of her (the lover's) own new independence. She has pawned his watch – which not only supplies her with funds to travel but necessarily prevents him from doing the same – and thus has both the inclination and the independence to make her own choices.)

This location (as process and place), however, refuses to be hypostatized in America or in the poem. Houston Baker writes that

[t]he blues singer's signatory coda is always *atopic*, placeless: "If anybody ask you who sang this song/Tell 'em X done been here and gone." The "signature" is a space already "X"(ed), a trace of the already "gone" – a fissure rejoined. Nevertheless, the "you" (audience) addressed is always free to invoke the X(ed) spot in the body's absence (5).[14]

Thus space is replaced by absence and marked by a sign (the X), a sign which is the subject, always already present (ante-origin) and becoming (anti-origin). The blues are thus perpetually displaced as they synthesize both timeless properties of the sign.[15]

Baker defines *atopos* as placelessness. The prefix *a-* connotes a negation or a privation. Here this denial creates a physically alienating absence. Hughes's poem 'Garden' (1931) collates these blues manifestations of atopicality:

> Strange
> Distorted blades of grass,
> Strange
> Distorted trees,
> Strange
> Distorted tulips
> On their knees.
>> (159)

The Garden that is America, in the paradise promised in American rhetoric throughout its history, becomes 'Strange [. . .] Strange [. . .] Strange' in Hughes's eyes. Forcibly displaced from their homes, the imported slaves found their new surroundings (social but also physical) strange in the most literal sense. Encountering foreign climates and landscapes within the context of the dehumanizing enslavement and middle passage, America becomes distorted and menacingly alienating where even the tulips are on their knees: beauty is subject to the distortion of subjugation that defined their American experience. America is thus defined negatively as the antithesis of the Garden. Ironically echoing the literary tradition of negative catalogues in representations of America, dating back as early as Michel de Montaigne, it literally becomes *no*-place; or perversely: utopia. Hughes plays on this tension of presence and absence as he introduces images only to pre-emptively negate them. The 'Strange/Distorted trees' inevitably reflect on familiar and faultless trees. The repeated phrases emphasize the prevalence of corruption and alienation but also express a longing for restoration and a reiterated plea to renegotiate the terms of mobility, using the blues to ground the sense of home.

Hughes does more than signify on the early representations of America and on the tropic legacy of *a- u- topos*. The imagery he uses in 'Garden' also alludes to one of the cornerstone texts of American literature: Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. In his poem, Whitman celebrates the expansiveness and the promise of American landscape. For Whitman, the 'spear of summer grass' holds the meaning of life, the possibility of unreserved love, as well as the inspiration for poetry. He urges us to 'Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat' (#5, line 84). 'I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of

the stars' (#31, line 663). But Hughes is betrayed by this false image for, to him, the blade of grass is alien and warped. Prefiguring the powerful image of Billie Holiday's 1939 anti-lynching song, 'Strange Fruit', Hughes's 'Garden' inscribes the terror and violence of African-American history onto the landscape: 'Southern trees bear a strange fruit/Blood on the leaves, blood at the root/ Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze'. Although Holiday's song, written by Lewis Allen, is a much more explicit description of social and political violence as perversely natural, the natural imagery in 'Garden' and its increasing deformation (from grass to trees) and final personification suggests a parallel process in Hughes's poem. The poem is a lament, an accusation, a plea and a conviction that through his song, the American landscape can be reclaimed, transforming the *atopos* of the blues to a literary and political presence that communes with the *you* to whom it is implicitly addressed. The role of *you* is, as Baker indicated in the passage above, signified despite the body's absence through the trace, the 'X' or the mark, here the poet's mark; i.e. the poem. Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s landmark *The Signifying Monkey* (1988) explores various aspects of signifying as a process of representation, a poetic and political practice central to the blues.

Signifying

In *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, Gates identifies and discusses at length the linguistic and rhetorical system of representation and its role in African-American cultural tradition.[16] Signifyin(g) is, for Gates, the trope of tropes in black representation, for not only does it name a system of representation, containing within it countless sub-tropes, or figurative devices, but it is itself also an example of the very process it names, signifying as it does upon the standard English *signifying*. Signifyin(g) defines the relation between the signifier (the sign) and the signified (the event), privileging the signifier.[17] By focusing on the method of reference, meaning is deferred, a delay which enriches the realm of connotation: the listener (or reader) must 'look through words for their full meaning' (76). Roger D. Abrahams defined signifying as giving 'direction through indirection' (Gates, 1988: 74).[18] One important example of the different types and methods of signifying which Gates describes is in his treatment of different types of rhyme. Specifically, he differentiates between rhymes that emphasize the denotations of two words – suggesting that the phonetic is crucial in the production of meaning – and rhymes which highlight the aural relation of the words: 'they take their received meaning for granted and depend for their marvellous effect on the sheer play of the signifier' (63).[19]

   This privileging of the signifier over the signified can also be seen in Adornian terms. The question of signification speaks to the possibility and processes of representation whereby meaning is created or communicated. For Adorno

it the relationship between structural coherence and intelligibility which establishes the totalizing unity of a classical work, or the disruption thereof. In its attempt to communicate meaning, the work of art – no matter how authentic, through social critique, or autonomous, through individualism – will inevitably be socialized and neutralized.[20] This fatalism notwithstanding, the value of a work of art lies in its ability (or attempt) to resist this neutralization, where this resistance becomes manifest by deferring meaning. It is by rejecting a facile intelligibility that will render that meaning communicated by music effectively meaningless, by paradoxically postponing the social accessibility of the work of art that makes it critically authentic and socially representative. Similarly, the works of the three authors with whom we are concerned here concentrate on the language of representation. Both gender and ethnic identity in the texts are signalled significantly through language. Not least of these manifestations is their written representations of black dialect, whereby the authors occasionally and consciously inserted visual indicators of dialect even when these dialectical differences are inaudible (this practice was already briefly discussed in terms of ethnopoetics).

The shifted attention to the signifier simultaneously delays the meaning and enriches it through the added layers of reference, demanding a much more complex act of listening/reading. Signifying can be visualized as a gyrating figurative device: its referentiality keeps bringing in new layers of meaning while its self-consciousness keeps it turning back on itself. Gates comments that 'Signifyin(g) is black double-voicedness; because it always entails formal revision and an intertextual relation' (51). Here Gates refers to the Bakhtinian notion of the 'double-voiced word' in which the signified is recognized and wilfully displaced in favour of a new, subjective signified which both holds a new meaning and implicitly comments on the first meaning.

It is through this doubleness that signifying can be seen as the culmination of the variously formulated dualities in the African-American experience. One of the more famous of these formulations is the Du Boisian premise of the double-consciousness of the African-American, briefly mentioned above:

> From the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American [. . .] from this must arise a painful self-consciousness [. . .] Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or to revolt, to hypocrisy or to radicalism. (1903: 164–5)

Signifying, as an alternative linguistic and rhetorical system embodies this duality and provides a verbal medium for the radical revolt which Du Bois stipulates as inevitable.

However, Gates takes care to dispel the notion of a purely binary opposition in the process of signifying. While the sense of doubleness is crucial in African-American politics and aesthetics, Gates cautions against a simplistic transposition

of the signifying allegory to the politics of black versus white in America. This kind of interpretation is both relevant and useful but by no means comprehensive. Gates reminds us of the third protagonist in the myth of the Signifying Monkey, the Elephant, and suggests a trinary model, rather than a binary one. In the classic tales of the Signifying Monkey, the Monkey signifies upon the Lion, who has proclaimed himself king of the Jungle. The Lion does not recognize the language of Signification and incorrectly takes the Monkey's words literally, believing that the Elephant has maligned him. The Lion rushes off to confront the wrongly accused Elephant who successfully defeats the Lion in the confrontation. The Lion returns, defeated, realizing that his error was to mistake the Monkey's signifying as literal, only to fall back into the same trap as the Monkey, whom he is trying to punish, manages to escape using the same verbal weapon.[21]

Refiguring the relationship of the works of Hughes, Hurston and G. Jones, the socio-political and literary context in which their works were written and are received, and the blues in terms of this trinary model crucially illuminates the role of the blues in these texts. Specifically, I would like to focus on aligning this image of the Elephant with the role of the blues. In the tale of the Signifying Monkey, the real conflict lies between the Monkey and the Lion. The Elephant is used as an artificially constructed referent in the Monkey's tale in order to remove the focus from the immediate appearance of meaning. Or, to paraphrase Abrahams's formula: he is directing the Lion's actions through indirection. Similarly, Hughes, Hurston and Jones signify on the blues. By incorporating blues motifs, rhythms and structures into their writing, these authors – however subtly – temporarily divert the attention of the reader to these blues: from the Signified and onto a second level of Signifier (the blues themselves), thus self-consciously emphasizing the methodology of the text. This is multilayered as this technique introduces into the poetry or prose an abundance of resonances which the blues (themselves an example of signifying) carry.

Considering some of the central blues motifs and their presence in these texts, mediated through, for example, metaphor, allusion, allegory, parallelism and simile demonstrates how signifying succeeds in pushing the implications of the texts to new levels. In particular, as we saw earlier from Davis's work, there exists a crucial gendered subset of motifs that illustrates the political possibilities of signifying in the blues. Focusing on women and the effect these changes had on African-American women's experiences, pointing out that women were the first blues artists to be recorded, she suggests that one reason for this was that the new reality led to growing differences between men and women within the black community. As the newly liberated female population of the beginning of the twentieth century (literally post-emancipation as well as figuratively emancipated from male-dominated structures) sought to understand their social and individual roles and identities, they appropriated and signified on

the language of their surroundings, infusing it with a new set of meanings. This created a constant disparity between mainstream culture and the ironic use of these tropes within African-American blues: sexuality, love, marriage, woman's domesticity.[22] One way in which this distance was represented in the blues was through the difference between the lyrics and the performance. The very fact of Hughes's blues poetry exposes this tension as it signifies on poetic structures and expectations. Encountering a clear blues (aural) structure in a textual form that purports poetic value is startling and suspends immediate comprehension, invoking instead a rare directness in the experience of the form. This delay rejects easy associations and allows the reader to gather added dimensions of reference in her reading of the poem.

The blues rely heavily on signifying where through performance styles and intonation, as well as lyrics that are often consciously and carefully decontextualized, they create meaning and anti-meaning: a subject and its opposite. Davis demonstrates how Bessie Smith uses performance to delay and thus reverse the immediate interpretation of the words she sings. Smith's rendition of 'Sam Jones's Blues' is one of the few examples where she sings about marriage. The heavy irony and comic sarcasm in her expression draw attention to her signifying and emphasizes the dimensions of meaning which this technique adds to the romantic Europeanized connotations of marriage. The blues's ironic comment about marriage resonates in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Janie Mae Crawford-Killicks-Starks-Woods is a thrice-married, twice-widowed, independent single woman. The model of marriage inherited from white social values was relatively new to the African-American communities in the beginning of the twentieth century. Far from succumbing to the confines stipulated by conventional notions of marriage, Janie demands a new type of relationship with a man and finally constructs it with Tea Cake. As already pointed out, significantly, there is little mention of children in the various marriages and, in another twist of the traditional model of marriage, the progeny of Janie's relationship is not a child but the product of her voice: her story. The standard structures and expectations of the romantic novel are reversed. Instead of a Victorian tale of angelic chastity, romantic love institutionalized through marriage and finally a countryside manor with financial stability and familial bliss (here I rely on stereotype to dramatize the difference), our protagonist moves from sexual awakening to marital disappointment, from financial security to effective penury, and from the comfort of family and community of the countryside to a solitary walk into the heart of town.

The frequent irony and cynicism used to depict conventional domesticity and the sexual division of labour 'reveals the beginnings of an oppositional attitude toward patriarchal ideology' (Davis, 1999: 18), and not only towards the oppressive white culture. Women were generally not portrayed in the blues as devastated or crushed by their abandonment or mistreatment. 'Far more typical are songs in which women explicitly celebrate their right to conduct

themselves as expansively and even as undesirably as men' (21–2). Even those blues that speak about the misery of abandonment function as an outlet by which the pain might be eased and even purged. The very act of expression is a manifestation of control and self-assertion. The blues performance was, in fact, one of the first forums in which important issues such as male violence against women and homosexuality were addressed. Women's blues of the 1920s provided an alternative model for black women in America to follow: the female blues singer was liberated, independent, sexually self-aware, assertive and complex.[23]

The blues did more than provide a forum to explore new individualized identities, new processes of identity making, new and dynamic social roles such as femininity, masculinity, the new gendered identities and the effects of urban life on the African-American communities. They were a form of social protest. It is precisely by means of the figurative Elephant, the subtlety and indirection inherent in the process of signifying, that the tone of dissent in the blues was established.[24] However, the very process of the blues – aesthetic creativity which explores and communicates a personal experience or emotion in a way that regenerates and rejuvenates a standardized form – asserts a new independence and thus sets new conditions for society, demanding that this new voice be heard. In Hughes's delightfully funny blues poem, 'Morning After' (1942), Hughes describes a man who is woken from his drunken stupor by the noisy snoring of the woman asleep next to him:

> I said, Baby! Baby!
> Please don't snore so loud.
> Baby! Please!
> Please don't snore so loud.
> You jest a little bit o' woman but you
> Sound like a great big crowd.
> > (248; Lines: 13–18)

This is one of Hughes's more light-hearted poems, where he captures a tiny but materially real moment in the every-day lives of people living around him. And yet, this poem may also be read as an allegorical reference to the new African-American voice. The man in the poem is the white population of America that was slowly waking from their stupor, drunk with their own power, only to realize that the 'little bit o' woman', the de-masculinized black man, is beginning to make his own voice heard and in fact, to sound 'like a great big crowd'. Thus, while the humorous effect of the poem is the more straightforward response elicited, the element of protest that is embedded into the poem provides an important example of the ways in which both the blues and Hughes's blues poetry react against the existing social order. All too frequent claims that the subtlety of protest belies any tones of dissent in the blues suggest a regrettably oversimplified interpretation. Another, much less equivocal, example of protest

in Hughes's poetry is 'Southern Mammy Sings' (1941). Through his manipulation of the blues structure (here, shifting the repeated lines to the end of each stanza), Hughes punctuates his poetic narrative with the associative overtones of the music:

> Last week they lynched a colored boy.
> They hung him to a tree.
> That colored boy ain't said a thing
> But we all should be free
>   Yes, m'am!
> We all should be free.
>   (227; Lines: 13–18)

The repeated lines, the direct address, the cynicism (present here, though more apparent in the other stanzas of the poem) and stock phrases such as 'I am getting' tired!/Lawd!/I am getting' tired!' (lines 4–6), are some of the features of this poem that clearly identify its blues foundations. By directing the reader outside the poem (to the blues), the poet, like the Signifyin(g) Monkey, is able to conceal while realizing his subversive intent.

While most of the classic blues did not contain protest in the sense of a direct call for action, through aesthetic use of irony and humour, through the signifying act of direction through indirection, the blues assert an empowering communal identity. Similarly, Hurston's novel subtly undermines the foundation of the patriarchal society within which Janie must live by subtly revising the power structure. Janie's act of protest consists of her disturbing the link between silence and presence which defines her. Effectively remaining silent for over twenty years in the novel, Janie's silence becomes the signifier for her existence, the 'X' by which she is traced and identified. This (female) gendered silence is disrupted when Janie 'thrusts' herself (a self-evidently masculine verb) into the conversation.

> Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and talks His inside business. He told me how surprise He was 'bout y'all turning out so smart after Him makin' yuh different; and how surprised y'all is goin' tuh be if you ever find out you don't know half as much 'bout us [women] as you think you do. (70–1)

It is her voice, what it relates and its possession of knowledge and authority, that threatens Starks: 'You getting' too moufy, Janie', he says. Not unlike Hughes's little bit of woman (or, indeed Ursa and Correy), it is the power of her mouth that like the women blues singers in history, the gradually amplified tone of Janie's history, as it is culminates in her narrative, destabilizes the patriarchal order.

Gayl Jones's protagonist, U.C., a blues singer herself, explicitly re-enacts this empowering recovery of voice. Initially attracting him to her, U.C.'s voice

becomes increasingly threatening to Mutt, her husband, and is eventually temporarily silenced, due to her injury. Unable to sing, U.C. reacts in a delirious diatribe against her husband: '"They said you had those nurses scared to death of you. Cussing them out like that. Saying words they ain't never heard before"' (8). '"I thought everybody I seen was him and I cussed everybody I seen out. I kept looking up and cussing everybody"' (51). This hysteria does not yet have the empowering effect that her new blues voice will have, but it is a cathartic mechanism through which Jones enables her character to rupture the signifying gender order. Until this point, U.C. has been effectively silent: not having yet narrated Corregidora's story in full, she has also not yet constructed her own story. Feverishly finding her new voice in the hospital and in her dreams afterwards, U.C. rejects that silence that represented her and exercises her voice by exorcizing the image of her husband. As he embodies her silence and now her all-consuming inability to 'make generations', using the language she learned from him, she struggles to shatter his pervasive reflection (one that becomes interchangeable with that of Corregidora as a personification of evil, the silencer of voice). When she finally does find her new voice, it is one that 'sounded like it had sweat in it' (54). Max Monroe, the owner of the club in which she sings describes it as,

> a hard kind of voice [. . .] like callused hands. Strong and hard but gentle underneath. Strong but gentle too. The kind of voice that can hurt you. I can't explain it. Hurt you and make you still want to listen. (96)

Max's struggle to describe it and his use of oxymoronic metaphors illustrate the change U.C. has undergone and the extent of her disruption of gendered symbolism. And yet like Janie who remains silent for years (causing some critics to complain that she never does fully realize her voice), U.C. is characterized by things she does not say. There are countless examples in *Corregidora* where Ursa leaves things unsaid, silently confiding to the reader what is in her mind. Far from pointing to any failure of self-realization, in the context of these feminized narratives of articulation, these silences suggest a reformulation of the patriarchally-determined gender balance of silence versus speech. Silence becomes another form of subversion whereby Starks's statement that 'Ah told you in de very first beginnin' dat Ah aimed tuh be uh big voice' reveals his impotence at true communication with his wife. The women's silence comes *in the break* (the title of Fred Moten's book on the aesthetics of the black radical tradition, and an allusion to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*), and becomes the blues moan, the nonverbal passionate utterance that combines the pain and the pleasure of the blues experience:

> *They call it the devil blues. It ride your back. It devil you.* I bit my lip singing. I troubled my mind, took my rocker down by the river again. It was as if I wanted

them to see what he'd done, hear it. All those blues feelings [. . .] My voice felt like it was screaming. What do they say about pleasure mixed in the pain? That's the way it always was with him. (L. Jones, 1963: 50)

In both these feminized blues texts, the history of silence is united with the protagonist's new voice and becomes her blues song. The new blues song is one that thus reconfigures the historical narrative of individuation, articulating the Adornian balancing process of socialization, making the history intelligible and immediate.

Chapter 2

Bebop spoken here: performativity in Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin and Toni Morrison

In his landmark *The Birth of Bebop* (1997), Scott DeVeaux positions bebop as the 'the point at which the yardstick [his metaphor for the history of jazz] comes into balance' for it is 'the point at which our contemporary ideas of jazz come into focus' (1).[1] Citing jazz scholar Bernard Gendron, he goes on to describe it as 'both the source of the present – "that great revolution in jazz which made all subsequent jazz modernisms possible" – and the prism through which we absorb the past. To understand jazz, one must understand bebop' (3). The pivotal role played by bebop as a musical moment where the past and the present meet is a central trope in key jazz novels which I shall be examining in this chapter. Bebop has an ambivalent relation to its musical ancestry. The ways in which the boppers dealt with this ambivalence introduce notions of performativity, and they are adopted by the authors in their literary endeavours to achieve a parallel reconciliation.

Emerging out of an increasingly popularized form of swing in the late 1930s and early 1940s, bebop dramatically innovated virtually every aspect of jazz. Generally thought to be onomatopoeically named after the falling notes of the chord, *be-bop*, the music marks a shift from the often syrupy lyrics of swing to the nonsense gibberish of, say, *salt-peanuts* (the name of a bebop standard by Dizzy Gillespie which voices that falling melody). Langston Hughes, moreover, in one of his Jesse B. Simple short stories explains the name as the sound of the violent meeting of black bodies with white power: 'That's where BeBop came from, beaten right out of some Negro's head into them horns and saxophones and piano keys that plays it' (1961: 118).

Bebop

One of the defining elements of bebop is its intricate harmonic improvisations that focus on chromatic dissonance and polyrhythms.

The boppers began to abandon the traditional practice of improvising or providing variations on a melodic theme. Instead, they began to play their

variations on the chords on which the melody was based, usually creating entirely new melodies, or sometimes they merely used the original melody as the bass notes for a new set of chords, and improvised a countermelody. (Jones, 1963: 196)

Harmonic improvisation focuses on the combination of notes played together, i.e. chords (harmony), rather than notes played in succession (melody). By concentrating on the underlying harmonic foundation of a piece, the musicians inevitably too stretched the melodic boundaries, establishing a new logic in the musical experience.

Furthermore, moving away from common jazz conventions of the time, the bebop band was generally composed of a more extended rhythm section, with the drummer and bass player taking over the general rhythmic momentum of the music. The piano player was given more freedom to support the harmonic and melodic innovations of the other musicians, as well as to pursue his (it was generally *his*) own improvisatory impulses. Moreover, the enhanced rhythm section enabled each musician to play a much more expressive and complex role in the production of music: the drummer, bass player, pianist, as well as any percussionist or vibraphonist in the band, now had the freedom to experiment harmonically while the new rhythmic density allowed the other musicians to play a part in the rhythmic construct. This density was embedded into the music by introducing polyrhythmic sequences, often focusing on discontinuity and implication rather than the much more straightforward and continuous swing-beat. In his study of the development of bebop, DeVeaux commented that,

> The new rhythmic language of bebop – its discontinuities, its elusive ebb and flow, its sudden spurts and stops – is strikingly original, and in retrospect the most important musical contribution of the bebop generation. The presence or absence of the rhythmic sensibility found in the improvising of Charlie Parker is a crucial factor separating premodern (swing) and modern (bebop) jazz. (1997: 70)

It was, in fact, this focus on discontinuity and rhythmic complexity which eventually marked the divergent musical goals and priorities of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, two of the most important figures in bebop. In a 1949 interview with *Down Beat*, Parker indicated that dense polyrhythms were an integral part of the new musical language that bebop manifested. Gillespie, on the other hand, opted for a smoother and more immediately palatable (though no less innovative) rhythmic accompaniment, as he went on to elucidate in a rebuttal interview and in his own musical choices as bandleader. In addition to the expanded rhythm section, the bebop bands generally had a trumpet player and a saxophone player, frequently complementing one another or, as famously exemplified in the amazing partnership of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker,

spurring one another on in an intense and fierce dialogue, producing a richness of musical cooperation rarely repeated. These various new complexities that distinguish bebop from swing music (the primary popular music of the time) marked the transformation of jazz into an acknowledged artform. The music became a much more intellectualized experience, demanding a more attentive audience, on the one hand, and a much more musically savvy musician who could pursue the harmonic complexities and push forward the rhythmic densities, on the other.[2]

Having been virtually born in Minton's Playhouse, a jazz club in the heart of Harlem, bebop is often associated with a uniquely black aesthetic, one that parallels the high energies and gradually bubbling racial tensions of post-World War II urban centres (as reflected in Hughes's story). Moreover, there was a widespread understanding that the pace and complexities of bebop were such precisely because they were designed by and for black musicians, inevitably leaving behind white jazz players and critics. Miles Davis makes claims to this effect when he comments in his autobiography that Minton's 'was the music laboratory for bebop':

> After it polished up at Minton's, *then* it went downtown to 52nd Street [. . .] where white people heard it. But what has to be understood in all of this is no matter how good the music sounded down on 52nd Street, it wasn't as hot or as innovative as it was uptown at Minton's. The idea was that you had to calm the innovation down for the white folks downtown because they couldn't handle the *real* thing. Now, don't get me wrong, there were *some* good white people who were brave enough to come up to Minton's. But they were few and far between. (1989: 54)

Davis's grudging qualification notwithstanding, white musicians (Al Haig, Stan Levey and Red Rodney, to name three) had been integrally involved in bebop since its inception. Bebop bands were, moreover, some of the first to perform and record as mixed-race bands on any regular basis. And yet, bebop, with its growing gap between form and content, its vociferous pace, its geography and its roaring nascence despite potent, even crippling racism, did harness creative energies out of a particularly African-American experience. Perhaps signalling this, bebop also marks the emergence of the jam session as a performance structure, which stood in stark contrast to the principally white big-band orchestras of swing-bands, and which has since become identified as a marker of jazz authenticity stereotypically associated with African-American culture. This perceived sign of authenticity in jazz soon became a desirable, marketable forum for jazz, demonstrating the often perverse effects of cultural production, to which I shall return below.

This perceived authenticity notwithstanding, bebop had an ambivalent relationship to traditional forms out of which it grows, an ambivalence which

DeVeaux attributes to precisely that discourse of authenticity that relegates these forms to the folk, the unsophisticated, the uncivilized, on one hand, and to the pervasive demands of the market on the other. On tradition, Dizzy Gillespie commented that: 'The bebop musicians didn't like to play the blues. They were ashamed. The media had made it shameful' (DeVeaux, 1997: 343).[3] Similarly, in her *Be-bop, Re-bop*, an explicitly bebop-inflected novel, Xam Wilson Cartiér offers a colourful description of bop's relation to blues:

> To them, 'slave' is a dirty word, like the blues, a bad image. . ..
>
> Did I hear you say 'the blues'? [. . .] Man! The blues to these chumps is a hell-drove springboard to the land of cotton. Presto! Spring back to dose old nightmare stockincap days back in the land of the gladly forgotten. (1987: 33)

Indeed, by the 1940s, the blues had been problematized in popular imagination, being directly – and often exclusively – linked with a vernacular culture, denying both its aesthetic richness and the socio-cultural history which informed its development. By generally rejecting a strict heritage of the blues form, opting instead for a dialogic relationship with the blues rhetoric, the beboppers participated in a double-pronged racializing process: not only are the blues deprived of their complexity (both musical and ethno-historical), but the boppers themselves become actors in a black-and-white masquerade that presupposes an inherent, racially (pre-)determined relationship to jazz.[4] This image of the masquerade is particularly useful for understanding the relation of bebop to its past, since the association to masks, minstrelsy, parody and mimicry recalls the role played by performance in conceptualizing race in American history. More often than not the boppers of the 1940s would begin by playing the tune of a well-known jazz standard. This statement of intent was then used as a springing board for radical harmonic explorations that subverted and often parodied the initial tune.[5]

In his extensive work on music, Theodor W. Adorno singles out a period during the development of Western classical music that lies between the tradition of tonality and the move to atonality: a period he associates with Gustav Mahler and Alban Berg. In his book, *Adorno on Music*, Robert Witkin identifies this musical moment in history as Tonal Irony and associates it with a parallel socio-cultural development which, through repetition and innovation, creates an ironic reference to past traditions, thus creating a new form. This transitional moment, using the past to create something altogether new, is, I suggest, mirrored in the role played by bebop in jazz history. Marking a moment in socio-cultural and political as well as in musical history, bebop becomes a medium through which this transition can be consciously articulated. Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and numerous other African-American writers have incorporated elements of bebop into their writing in order to explore the

social and aesthetic implications of this transitional moment. (Other such writers include Amiri Baraka, Xam Wilson Cartiér, Langston Hughes and Ishmael Reed.)[6] In this chapter, I consider how African-American authors resolve the historical and emerging tensions which characterize the coexistence of white- and African-American communities, through art.

Adorno's tonal irony

In his analysis of the transitional moment manifest in the music of Mahler and Berg, Adorno suggests that the music reflects the crisis of social and personal individuation of that historical period:

> It is the perception [in this music] that the Western idea of unified, internally coherent, as it were systematic music, whose unity is meant to be identical with its meaning, is no longer viable. It has become incompatible with a situation in which people are no longer in command of any authentic experience of such a meaning in their lives. It is incompatible with a world which has ceased to provide them with the categories of unity in happiness, leaving them only with those of standardized compulsion (1961a: 92).

The subject ceases to be understood as a unified entity which can neatly fall into preordained social, political or musical categories. This emerging perception of a divided subject complicates the relation of the part to the whole and the individual to the collective, moving further and further away from the delicate balance of the Beethoven-sonata, described in the previous chapter. Exploring how the music of Mahler and Berg contends with the emerging tensions between the subject and object Adorno observes that, 'In Berg elaboration of detail means [. . .] their abolition and subsequent preservation on a higher plane'. He goes on: 'What he retained from tonality [. . .] was a traditional means of bringing about an untraditional end, namely the destruction of the musical detail by the totality' (1961c: 182).

By allowing a new focus on the divided subject of the music, Berg effectively reduces the part to its smallest components in order to recompose the whole with a density otherwise unattainable. Adorno goes on to suggest that this technique is somewhat unmelodic – a description which, as has been seen, resonates with the innovations of bebop with its stress on harmonic innovation and its frequent use of dissonance. Berg 'attempt[s] to atomize the compositional material [. . .] in order to achieve a totality of unparalleled density, without fissure or edges, without the disruptive factor of effectively self-contained partial segments' (183). Thus, while the emerging complexity of the subject is crucial to Berg's music, his project (and that of Adorno) is finally to understand how these function to create the whole. As will be shown presently, this impulse to reconfigure the role of the individual in the collective finds its parallel in bebop.

Moreover, this ultimate return to the collective is a guiding force in the fictional work of Ellison, Baldwin and Morrison.

The crisis of the divided subject also poses a crisis in aesthetics and its possibilities of representation. Traditional aesthetic forms lose their meaning, becoming instead a 'standardized compulsion,' as above, an aesthetic impulse that can no longer relate directly to the subject. They become form without content, defined by Adorno as the *banal*. For Adorno, despite using many of those inherited formal characteristics that had already become meaningless, Mahler's music is saved from utter banality by means of his self-conscious manipulation of the conventional forms and their expected meanings: 'by attributing to the traditional words and syntax of music intentions which they no longer possessed, he signalled his recognition of the rupture' (1961a: 85). Through this recognition he is able to evade banality and infuse new meaning into the old forms. In other words, as Witkin explains, 'Mahler's music [. . .] imitates the world's course – its bleak banality – in order to resist and oppose it' (115).

> What is key here, for Adorno, is what a subject does with such "empty" forms, what use is made of them. By establishing its non-identity in and through its distancing of itself in relation to such forms (and in its presence as an absence from such forms), the subject takes up the stance of irony [. . .] central to modernist art. (109)

The growing distance between form, as externality, and content, as a three-dimensional subject with multiple planes, becomes manifest in a parallel shift explored in the Cubist painting style of Picasso and Braque, for example, which represented the dissolution of a temporal or spatial plane on which truth is ordered. The painters draw together numerous perspectives that have not traditionally occupied the same moment onto one canvas, thus enabling them (indeed forcing them) to coexist simultaneously. This modernist sensibility which draws on a simultaneous multiplicity of subjectivities resonates in one of the central characteristics of bebop: the defining emphasis on harmonic improvisation in bebop explored the possibilities of simultaneously coexisting notes. Although bebop can be said to have reached the height of its self-realization in the years 1944–1947, a good forty-fifty years after the musical period about which Adorno was writing, the application of the ideas of the one to the other becomes abundantly clear in light of Adorno's analysis (itself written in the post-bop era).

Performing blackness

In my Introduction, I suggested a progression – conceptual rather than chronological – of shifting ideas of African-American selfhood and its role in American society; a progression that is reflected in the creative impulses of the literary

works I am analysing. By the 1940s, the heyday of bebop, despite persistent segregation in the South, any clear or actual division between black and white communities was no longer viable – be it a division along social, cultural, political or genetic lines. (It is perfectly arguable, of course, that such a division could never actually be made. However, broadly speaking, during slavery and its early aftermath the communities were each more homogenous and more distinct than in the middle of the twentieth century. Moreover, in the earlier period the two ethnic cultures were separated by a much wider linguistic and conceptual gap.) *Black* and *white* ceased being unambiguous ethnic or cultural categories in the political or creative imaginations and linguistic representations in the works of African-American authors. Thus it is the impulse to act, to create something new, to assert a selfhood or a process of self-identification that attempts to rise above these ambiguities, which offers fruitful means with which African Americans could locate themselves in American society.

Baldwin's novel, *Another Country*, is crucially related to bebop, not least because it is about an African-American jazz musician in the 1940s. His focus on the boundary at which white America and African America (presupposing that these communities are distinct) meet, however, is precisely what distinguishes him from Ralph Ellison and Toni Morrison – two additional writers whose work is clearly informed by bebop and yet who seek to penetrate these boundaries. For all three authors the notion of ethnic boundaries plays a central role and, in all three, these boundaries and the questions of choice they entail can be identified by the function of the performative in the novels. In his study of racial thinking in African-American literature, *Authentic Blackness* (1999), J. Martin Favor introduces a performative discourse, with particular reference to the writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Relevant to our purposes here, the inherent dependence on structures of the past incorporated into the present indicated in his model, crucially manifests the Adornian construct of divided selves. Performativity adds new dimensions to the history of race in America for it suggests that not only conscious choice and artificial constructions but also display, spectacle and an implied audience are central to racial configurations. The model of performativity casts new light on the history of African-American performance, from minstrelsy in its many forms, through to bebop, exposing the biting social critique available to processes of mimicry and parody, but also focusing on the complex racial thinking underlying them.

Bebop, which was often associated with a fine-tuned performed sensibility (e.g. the staple horn-rimmed glasses, beret and goatee sported by many of the boppers), is firmly located within this self-conscious and volatile tradition. Beboppers often used jazz standards, not infrequently written by white composers (e.g. Gershwin, Porter, Berlin), and by exploring the harmonic possibilities of the underlying chords reached radical new frontiers in the geography of music.[7] That the characteristic whirlwind of notes frustrated popular demands for facile entertainment can be seen as commenting on both the nature of

market demands and its relation to the possibilities of jazz as both art and entertainment. These elements of role playing and performativity point to how some African-American artists use their creative impulses to explore ways of making something new, rewriting their space and their narratives, processes which function centrally in the novels I consider here.

Writers as diverse as Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin and Toni Morrison all consistently incorporate jazz music into their literary works in order to investigate and articulate ethnic identity-making processes. Although they accomplish these explorations in widely varying fashions, ethnic boundaries are drawn, retracted, extended and crossed in all of them and thus establishing a conceptual thread linking the different works, offering a cumulative representation of ethnic thought in the middle of the twentieth century. By considering the works of these writers in terms of a bebop performative, a model emerges which demands a balance between *descent* and *consent* and is both manifested and recreated through *performance*.

Frederik Barth's has developed a theory of ethnic boundaries that focuses on what he calls 'sectors of articulation' as the site where ethnicity is articulated and which is fundamentally based on the premise of some level of homogeneity within the group. In his important *Beyond Ethnicity*, Werner Sollors transposes Barth's theory onto the American context and suggests that 'it is [. . .] because Americans take so much for granted among themselves that they can dramatize their differences comfortably' (1986: 14). It is this combination of similarities and differences that heightens the importance of choice or *consent*, to use Sollors's term, as it becomes a paramount factor in the development of an ethnic group identity. The choice suggests a consciousness (however subtle) which in turn suggests a manipulated rather than organic, active rather than passive, process of identification. It is this activity which serves the basis of the performative discourse.

Dissonance: racialized divisiveness and performed identities

There are numerous ways to understand the idea of performativity as an ethnically determining factor. The theory is premised on the idea that ethnicity is a social construct which is reproduced and perpetuated through individual and communal activities, thus inevitably invested with the potentially divisive politics of race. Werner Sollors discusses Herbert Gans's work on 'symbolic ethnicity' where Gans 'also call[s] attention to the ways in which modern ethnic identification works by external symbols rather than by continual activities that make demands upon people who define themselves as "ethnic"'. Sollors then goes on to pose the question: 'Are ethnics merely Americans who are separated from each other by the same culture?' (35–6). This becomes a crucial question when

considering notions of African-American ethnicity in the 1940s. Where the general cultural patterns are arguably parallel or, indeed, essentially the same in black and white communities (specifically I refer to those urban or rural communities which exist in close proximity to one another, rather than those rare isolated communal pockets), symbols are sought to reassert a cultural distance and to justify a desired or legitimize an imagined difference. These novels and their representation of ethnic identity are illuminated by the links of bebop to performativity and of both of these to the Adornian notions described as *tonal irony* and *divided selves.*

Frederik Barth's 'sectors of articulation' illuminate the basic premises of performativity, as they concentrate on the site of ethnic interfaces. Barth discusses the implications and types of inter-ethnic relations and suggests that in order for two ethnic communities which coexist to be able to communicate and interact they must reach a level of sameness. Thus, for these sectors of articulation to exist, each discrete, ethnically identified group must allow for an area of flexibility which enables this dialogue. The ideas which Barth proposes in order to understand and define ethnic categories are very useful. By focusing not so much on the particular content of an ethnic group but rather on where and how a boundary which creates a clear distinction from another ethnic group is drawn, Barth highlights one of the most problematic and complex aspects of ethnicity.[8] The racial politics of bebop beg the questions: how is this demarcation established and how are the sectors of sameness mapped out. In this chapter I shall be looking at two manifestations of performativity, as they are explored primarily by the three authors: passing and multiple identities.

Passing performative

The ethnicizing activity of choice, whether in history or in literature, resonates even more powerfully when the stereotypifying physical markers of race are absent or blurred. Passing offers the most dramatic version of performativity in its deliberate adoption of a particular ethnic culture: the subject who adopts a persona must follow the rules of a performance, ever-conscious of the perceptive gaze of an audience and always, centrally, concerned with the possibility of disclosure. Inevitably shifting emphasis to form elucidates the illuminating links to bebop that too adopts a structural complexity over a lyrical one. Similarly, Adorno proposes that for Mahler and Berg, meaning – that is, beauty and truth value – only reemerges through the recognition that form has become void of content. His analysis of nineteenth-century music initially decries this loss of content, an increasingly disappearing collusion of object with subject threatening its very existence, only redeeming meaning through the ironic disclosure of its loss.

The story of passing then is always the story of transformation or transition, never of stasis or object result. Ultimately, indeed, the narrative of passing is

always the narrative of its failure – either explicit or implicit, and always marked by the gaze of an *other*: some external source with knowledge or discovery of the alteration, one who can recognize the markers of identification but can also unravel them.[9] Passing is, thus, crucially a racializing process as it prolongs the racial categories while transversing them. There is an implied transience or fragility of this racializing process as its success is fundamentally at the hands of the anonymous spectator. Furthermore, any critical consideration of passing presumes an insider community with a shared knowledge of the pre-existing categories. This creates an inevitable dependence of the performer on the spectator, who can validate, discover and/or expose the secret of the perform- ance, establishing a tension but also a careful collusion between them. This dependence on mutual recognition and shared information which underlies an apparently hidden artifice recalls Adorno's application of irony into the musical developments of the late-nineteenth century – early-twentieth century which similarly relied on collective insider awareness for its success. There are at least two levels on which these processes are at work then, both within the music and outside it; in both, the subject dissipates, giving way to overpow- ering form, only to reemerge from that form. Rose Subotnik describes this as the meaning of nonmeaning: 'Adorno purports to derive [. . .] tremendous sig- nificance [. . .] from the notion of a structure that he characterizes in essence by its very loss of a capacity to mean' (1978: 212).[10] Bebop too relies on the meaning of nonmeaning but, for the success of its ironic disclosure relies also on the shared information, risking otherwise an alienated audience, as indeed many were by the dramatic innovations of bebop. Not only does this shared knowledge perpetuate community building processes (as, above, Miles Davis attributes an initial public dissatisfaction with bebop by the white critics pre- cisely because they were white and thus *not* in the know), but it also privileges a level of expertise virtually unprecedented with the blues. Through the per- formed act the music challenges the power of the spectator's gaze, reinventing the conventions that had become stale, through quotation, paraphrase, ironic parody, as well as through the radical on-stage personae of the musicians; as in, for example, the doped stoicism of Charlie Parker, the arrogance of Miles Davis, or the entertaining clowning of Dizzy Gillespie.[11]

Ralph Ellison's analysis of Charlie Parker's nickname, Bird, exemplifies this. With tongue only slightly in cheek, Ellison explores the possibility that the nick- name is related to the mockingbird: '*Mimus polyglottus*'. Quoting from Roger Tory Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds*, he explains that,

> the mockingbirds are "excellent mimics" who "adeptly imitate a score or more species found in the neighborhood," [. . .] a description which [. . .] comes close to Parker's way with a saxophone [. . .] his playing was characterized by velocity, by long-continued successions of notes and phrases, by swoops, bleats, echoes, rapidly repeated bebops – I mean rebopped bebops – by mocking

mimicry of other jazzmen's styles, and by interpolations of motifs from extra-
neous melodies, all of which added up to a dazzling display of wit, satire,
burlesque and pathos. Further, [. . .] there was, without doubt, as irrepressi-
ble a mockery in his personal conduct as in his music. (1964: 223)

For the irony to function successfully both the imitation and the recognition
of the imitative process must be acknowledged.[12] The reconfiguration of mime-
sis embodied by Charlie Parker functions centrally in Ellison's novel about
passing as the author challenges the notion of passing and explores its viability
as a possible conception of ethnicity. The imitation of a presumed ethnic
essence contains within it the paradox of passing in that in the very process of
manufacturing an ethnic self, the notion of racial authenticity is simultaneously
reaffirmed.

Signifying on the model offered by James Weldon Johnson's autobiographical
Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man (1912), Ralph Ellison's posthumously pub-
lished novel *Juneteenth* (1999) stands as a dramatic exploration of passing as its
central trope, complicating the structures of ethnic boundaries and extending
the trope to its limit. The protagonist of *Juneteenth* does more than simply pass;
as he is of indeterminate racial heritage he dramatically *is* both black and
white, his racialized identity depending on the life he *chooses*. The two are two
very different texts which explore some of the different options open to charac-
ters who have both white- and African-American ancestry and whose physicality
eludes any simple racialist categorization. Not least of these differences lies
in that the primary narrative technique in the former is an introspective first-
person narrative told in retrospect, whereas *Juneteenth* is a fragile putting
together of narrative fragments with various narrative voices through which the
story is told.[13] In both novels, the protagonists move variously from an identified
white- or an African-American persona. Johnson's novel follows the protago-
nist's psychological exploration as he journeys in and out of the two roles.

Being brought up by a light-skinned mother and being light-skinned himself,
Johnson's protagonist grows up initially assuming he is white. He is stunned and
disturbed when his African-American heritage is rather abruptly revealed to
him by a teacher. (This discovery resonates in – but differs importantly from – a
parallel scene from Zora Neale Hurston's later novel and her autobiographical
protagonist Janie Crawford. Until she is captured in a photograph where the
fact of her difference is marked in colour and pointed out directly, she seems to
have been oblivious to the socio-cultural implications of different skin-colours.
On the contrary, Johnson's character was very aware of the two distinct groups
but had been oblivious to his own location in them.) From this moment of dis-
covery, Johnson's character follows a series of explorations which are represented
by the retrospective narrator as clear-cut and objective, intellectually-motivated
choices. Although being thence raised as black, the protagonist's earlier self-
perception as white seems to have forever inhibited him from fully embracing

African-American culture – so much so that upon reaching maturity the character decides to move to the South in order to immerse himself in what he considers a more *authentic* black ethnicity. His brief journey exposes him to the vastly different social existence experienced by African Americans and by white Americans and culminates in a chilling scene where he witnesses a lynching. This moment determines his resolve to abandon the project of learning his race and he turns instead to a white society into which he learns to slip imperceptibly.

This idea that an ethnic identity can (and must) be learned as opposed to being inherent in one's genetic heritage is not new. The journey South made by Johnson's protagonist follows in the footsteps of W. E. B. Du Bois, to name one example, laying out a path followed again by James Baldwin, to name another. And yet Johnson complicates this suggestion as he clearly proposes that an element of biologically inherited race identity is inevitable. In these terms, the next stage of the character's narrative is particularly revealing. Presenting himself as a white man, he proceeds to become a musician, specializing in those black musical innovations (specifically elements of ragtime and jazz) introduced into traditionally white, European classical music. The not particularly subtle implication, then, is that by having an African-American ancestor, the character has a natural affinity to black musical modes. Tellingly for our purposes here, the crux of racial identity is music.

In addition to the implied role of the spectator in conceptualizations of passing, as already described, one of the significant characteristics of passing is the typically one-way aspect of it: there is the sense that the character is *naturally* African American but can *pass* for white.[14] Clearly these characters are of a mixed heritage and yet the question of passing for black rarely arises. Instead, what does often appear in literary explorations of this phenomenon is a perceived *in*-authenticity (the very possibility of which further destabilizes stringent categories of race): the African-American character who does not seem sufficiently black – in socio-cultural, behavioural and even linguistic senses – and yet is not considered entirely white, no matter what the colour of his skin nor any behavioural identity with a white society.[15] This distinction is directly linked to structures of class and particularly to the burgeoning black middle-class in the 1940s. The proliferation of references to classical music and ragtime in Johnson's text identifies this ethnic/class fault line along which Johnson's protagonist treads. The gap separating the two worlds the character experiences seems vast and irreconcilable. However, it is his role as a musician that provides that very narrow Barthian 'sector of articulation' through which he traverses the ethnic boundary; this bridge notwithstanding the two realms are irrevocably distinct.

Opposite to Johnson's ostensibly objective character, who intellectually experiments with different ethnic identities, stands the protagonist of Ralph Ellison's *Juneteenth*. Whereas Johnson's protagonist possesses a pragmatic, utilitarian and

rather distanced attitude towards the two identities he explored, Ellison's Senator Adam Sunraider, also known as Bliss, has a passionate love-hate relationship with the two cultures. *Juneteenth* is a unique exploration into the nature of ethnicity, presenting a boy whose biological lineage is unknown. The extremity of the two positions adopted by Ellison's protagonist (that is, as Bliss and as Sunraider) signals his caution to the reader from accepting either as viably exclusive possibilities. Resonant of the bebop sensibilities in which Ellison was immersed, passing in *Juneteenth* becomes effectively parodied.[16] By virtually becoming what he imitates while at the same time calling into question the very possibility of ethnic authenticity, Ellison's character embodies a parody which complicates the process of imitation itself, the image being imitated, and the self who is imitating. Similarly, as already described, in bebop, imitation is used only until that moment at which it is recognized, when the music can depart to explore new ground.

Reverend Hickman, the black preacher who raises Bliss as his own child, has no real evidence of any African-American ancestry in the boy. Nevertheless, Bliss is brought up in an African-American community as an insider. Paradoxically perhaps, far from being considered an outsider because of his uncertain parentage, Bliss plays a pivotal role in the community, working as a child preacher in the Baptist church under the guidance of Reverend Hickman. Bliss's own unquestioning sense of belonging, however, is violently shattered by an hysterical white woman who rushes into the church and attempts to seize him, claiming that he is her own lost son. This traumatic event shifts the trajectory of Bliss's life, introducing into his mind questions about race, about ethnic belonging, about family heritage and about the effect of a communal context. These questions become increasingly pressing until Bliss is no longer able to remain within the environment of the community in which he was raised, and he escapes. The white woman's claims transform Bliss into an outsider in a way which his being light-skinned or his unusual religious devotion (in contrast to other boys his age), could not. While being a preacher came naturally to him and he never questioned his skin colour, the sudden realization that he does not know who his mother is brings on a sense of exclusion and isolation that makes him question his own identity and that of his surroundings. Knowing the past, the traditions from which one has arrived to the present are crucial, both for bebop and for a constructive understanding of race. The critical importance of this knowledge for any innovation or creativity to be possible is made clear in Miles Davis's autobiography, when, for example, he describes ongoing tensions he had as a bandleader with a young Jackie McLean who refused to learn some of the traditional standards (1989: 153). Bliss's loss of faith and trust in Reverend Hickman, and in other members of the community, reflects his growing sense of betrayal at not having been made aware of what he now perceived to be a glaring difference. It is crucial that this moment of revelation not only leads him to contemplate and seek the absent maternal influence but it is also accompanied by the first awakening of his sexuality. As it is for the viability of

bebop, the underlying suggestion is that the painful process of introspection and self-questioning is a critical part of Bliss's maturation process.

Unlike Johnson's protagonist who retains an ambivalent but not unsympathetic attitude towards both ethnic possibilities throughout, Bliss's position towards each is much more extreme. The extent to which he was a fully integrated, unequivocal member of the African-American community in his childhood stands in direct proportion to the degree to which he distances himself from this ethnic association in his adulthood. The intermediary years in which Bliss experiments and investigates the various ethnically determined social roles from which he can select are left obscure in Ellison's novel. The reader is only given glimpses of this period through the somewhat surreal flashbacks taking place in the Senator's mind as he lies semi-conscious in the hospital after he has been shot.

Those years of investigation, however they were spent, transformed Bliss, the effectively African-American child preacher, into Adam Sunraider, an apparently white, fierce conservative, right-wing US Senator who persistently works against the African-American community. Significantly, it is precisely that 'sector of articulation,' that meeting point between two supposedly distinct identities, which Ellison obscures. The effect of this omission is to complicate the model of ethnic boundaries. By refusing to depict the narrative moment at which Bliss finally and irrevocably turns into Adam Sunraider, and, moreover, by cloaking that transformation in surreal narrative fragments, Ellison calls into question the very notion that such a boundary exists. And yet, *something* has clearly split Sunraider from Bliss. Ellison offers no direct resolution to this as such, but he does give a counter-example with Reverend Hickman, a blues musician – known also as 'God's Trombone' – who successfully navigates both worlds without losing sight of himself, even though his physical disorientation as he roams through the city reveals the complexity of this process. (As will be seen below, James Baldwin and Morrison, as well as Ellison's own *Invisible Man*, return to this link between the city and the process of ethnic identification.) By omitting the narrative links between Bliss/Sunraider's transformation, Ellison rejects a horizontal (temporally based) narrative, offering instead fragments of the protagonist's character which only contain meaning when superimposed on one another. It is only by regarding Sunraider through the prism already established of Bliss's character, that the dramatic shift and its racial and political implications are exposed. Recalling bebop's emphasis on vertical improvisation, whereby new sounds were explored through chordal structures which focus on notes that are played on top of one another, rather than in succession, Ellison's *Juneteenth* explores performativity as the superimposition of identities, where, again, it is the gaze of the spectator which can confirm but also destroy the passing performance.

Tracing the shift from the prevalence of biology to conceptualizations of ethnicity in Johnson to the indefinite function of *descent* in *Juneteenth* demonstrates a growing self-awareness in the aesthetics and in the racial politics of

later writers to the complexity of ethnicity, and to the possibilities of dramatic variety embedded within it. Echoing the dangers inherent in the very notion of passing, however, J. Martin Favor cautions that '[i]n combating an oppression based on the category "race," we may re-create the notion of "race" itself and, in doing so, hazard laying the framework for a new type of essentialism that potentially produces many facets of the old one' (9). Instead, he urges a non-essentialist acceptance of diversity within an ethnic community. Indeed, the terminology itself is telling as the choices made by the two protagonists assert *both* genetic descent and performative manifestations as critical to their ethnic identity: the process which the characters undertake is discussed in terms of *passing* rather than, for instance, *transforming* or *metamorphosing*, implicating some inevitable static inner essence that cannot be eliminated. Neither Johnson's character who seems desperate to appear white in order to attain financial and intellectual sustenance, as well as to win the hand of a woman, nor Senator Sunraider whose violent rejection of anything African-American arguably still maintains a passionate relationship with that cultural community, consider themselves completely divorced from African-American ethnic identity at any moment. What we see here is a reversion from *historical process* to *structures of identity*. If, as we have seen, for the blues as for Beethovian classicism, a defining principle was a part-whole balance, a wholeness characterized by processes of individuation and socialization, then with bebop as, according to Adorno with nineteenth-century European composition, this totality is missed. As Subotnik elucidates, 'nineteenth-century music, at the compositional as well as the historical level, is essentially a *structure* [. . .] consist[ing] of a hierarchy characterized at every level by the same pattern [. . .] the fixing or congealing of dismantled classical processes (such as history itself) into self-contained fragments, that is, into structures' (1978: 209). These self-contained fragments are precisely those static ethnically identified structures which constrain the protagonists.

And yet, the startlingly innovative and provocative element of Ellison's novel is that there is no evidence to prove any genetic affiliation with the black community, weakening arguments for the importance of blood descent to one's ethnic affiliation. The Senator's own racial politics notwithstanding, Ellison's narrative offers, instead, a complex socio-cultural and psychological model for ethnicity. Favor would seem to concur when he writes that 'nurture [. . .] contributes more to racial authenticity than does some inherent, innate or instinctual biological nature' (48). Both novels revolve around the particular ways in which the protagonists acted or *performed*, which enabled them to be affiliated with and effectively belong to a chosen ethnic culture. The emphasis on performativity and its manifestation through passing in Ellison's novel links it to the parallel focal point in bebop that enacts its own artifice: through a spectacle of bebop (what Miles Davis refers to repeatedly as *hipness*), through its irony (in the relation of bebop to popular and past music), and through its ardent challenge to its audiences. So, while the later novel appears to reaffirm

the confines of racial discourse, through its ironic manipulation of these struc-tures, it singularly challenges them. The categories of race become void of meaning as the literal, literary and musical forms they take succeed in circum-venting this void thus, simultaneously, giving rise to new meaning.

Multiple identities

Another way of identifying these fragment structures is as a multiplicity of selves. A central racialized figuration of African Americans conceived of by white America finds its principal expression in the minstrel shows: the stereo-typically jovial figure of the black (or black-faced) entertainer. (With this in mind, Miles Davis famously complained at what he perceived to be the undig-nified mugging of Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie.) This role of the entertaining clown is acknowledged in African-American literature as well. In his autobiographical novel *Black Boy* (1937), Richard Wright wrote explicitly about the behavioural mask his protagonist donned in his job at a hotel as a bellhop.

> I had begun coping with the white world too late. I could not make subservi-ence an automatic part of my behaviour [. . .] While standing before a white man I had to figure out how to *perform* each act and how to say each word. (My emphasis. 225)

Wright's autobiographical protagonist is perfectly conscious of his own per-formance (though one wonders whether this full awareness does not benefit from the retrospective consciousness of the author). In contrast, the fictional protagonist of Wright's *Native Son* (1940), Bigger Thomas, is a relatively *un*self-aware character who has been so conditioned by the social pressures around him that he comes to conform fully to the stereotype of an ignorant and violent black man, collapsing his entire identity into the role he fulfils.

The connection between bebop and recurring histories of reproduction and imitation on which performativity is based (that is, the imitation of some pre-sumed essence and the enaction of symbols signalling this essence) is made explicit as Xam Wilson Cartiér urges us to *Be-Bop, Re-bop*. Her powerful genre-blending, foot-tapping, finger-snapping jazz novel from 1987 is the first-person narrative of a young woman straining to make sense of the various roles she struggles to fill: woman, daughter, wife, mother, black, storyteller. As stories of the past and the present fuse into the driving narrative of a present tense she becomes the double of her father, Double, and the mirror of Muz/Vole, her mother.

> I'm spun back in time with Charlie to repeat-perform Muz and Double's scenes of tryst [. . .] Muz and I could be a duet[. . .] Charred row to hoe, stiff way to go with no time to gather moss or rest away from strife –What a life of

dry-spell disunity [. . .] Muz, do you see how the past has flowed forward to taint my today? [. . .] There's something holding my happiness back; something's hanging onto the hem of my bliss –Wait, let me rephrase this . . .. What is it that makes me farm through my mind in moments of soon-to-be happiness way from past woe? It seems I can't stand joy straight but have to dredge up past sadness to water it down. Most of my growth's in the past, underground; and the green clump of vigor that strangers can see (*Hey, look at me! I'm finally free!*) is merely surface-type of growth yet to be. Am I right? Muz, you tell me! (70–1)

The impulse to repeat and the urge to rephrase help the protagonist/narrator to locate herself within the confines of her various roles. She must communicate and validate her performance through the eyes of another so that she can make sense of it herself.

These ethnically identified multiple (alternatively, divided) selves rely largely on symbols of race, symbols which, according to Herbert Gans's formulation of symbolic ethnicity, may seem artificial in the qualitative sense, and hence inadequate representations of tradition. Conversely, I suggest, not only are these symbols, the markers of ethnicity, *not* two-dimensional or shallow pretence, but through their diverse individual and communal contextual resonances, they enrich those traditions which they represent, become inseparable from them, and reinfuse new life and motion into heretofore static structures. This process of appropriation, an enacted artifice, is not then the perpetuation of stasis but an active search for a communal, ethnically-based affiliation which continually recreates this community. In other words, an African-American subject can be recognized (by herself and others) as African American not so much by maintaining a tradition or adopting a symbol which represents this tradition, but by the very choice to do so. Thus the active choice to adopt a system of symbols and participate in a shared tradition reinfuses these with meaning and effectively recreates them, all-the-while maintaining an alternate self who can take on or cast off these symbols.[17] Adorno's model of tonal irony described above becomes particularly useful here.

The ironic stance of the implied author in *Juneteenth* is even more obvious in Ellison's seminal *Invisible Man*. Here, Ellison moves away from the political and ideological dilemmas of black and white interaction implicit in *Juneteenth* and seeks instead to create a new aesthetic language that reaffirms black ethnicity as such. The concentration on multiple selves, which in *Invisible Man* become literal, links this work to the modernist notion of divided subjectivities, explored by Adorno. This facet of performativity explores the various identities inhabited by one character and seeks ways of reconciling the often conflicting roles. Ellison's protagonist becomes consumed by the growing gap between content and form, subject and object, and focuses on exteriority – adopting numerous personae and yet remaining effectively invisible – precisely because he is unable

to reconcile his sense of self with the seemingly conflicting identities. The many identities adopted by the protagonist become a reiterative process whereby Invisible Man is repeatedly reborn. The novel follows the journey of the nameless protagonist as he moves from one identity to another. These widely differing roles are similar only in that they are superimposed by outside influences; finally, however, Invisible Man is defined by the very fact of these multiple identities. These given roles are, of course, not enough. For the character to realize himself he must first recognize his own invisibility and, through the act of isolation and narration that is the novel, he can fuse these two-dimensional social roles into a fulfilled and communicative subjectivity.

Ellison's Invisible Man seems only to realize the roles he performed in a retrospective retelling of his story. Throughout the novel, Ellison's protagonist repeatedly accepts identities given to him by others. The natural and seemingly unconscious sense of inferiority which goes hand in hand with the protagonist's initial and unquestioning (though not always positive) awe of white people is acquired through a naïve idolization of such role models as Dr Bledsoe, the leader of the college attended by the protagonist. This faith is then shattered by Mr Emerson, the son of a prospective employer, who reveals Dr Bledsoe's ulterior motives regarding the protagonist (though the homo-erotic implications in the scene suggest that Mr Emerson hides his own ulterior motives). Then as a new worker in Liberty Paints factory, the protagonist follows a rapid succession of ascribed identities: an African-American college boy hired so the foreman can avoid paying union wages, an engineer designing to take over existing personnel, a fink spying on the union and a union member spying on its opposers. This whirlwind is temporarily stopped with an explosion after which the protagonist's sense of identity is effectively wiped clean, leaving him in a 'black emptiness that was somehow a bath of whiteness' (230), a description using telling colour imagery and ambiguity. When he leaves what he believes to be the factory hospital he is swiftly slotted into a fresh wave of identities being alternately identified as a Southern 'field nigger' and as a 'young New York Negro' until he is literally given an identity by the communist Brotherhood.

While Invisible Man is unable to reconcile his different identities – they are mutually exclusive and render him physically paralysed, underground – he is not powerless. He has learned to steal energy, by means of which he begins that narrative process necessary to reclaim that ethnicizing reiteration and transform it into a creative and realizing process of identification. The power he steals enables him to begin telling his story, thus creating his own narrative through which he will eventually be able to emerge from his invisibility. Until then, however, the image of pure whiteness is depicted in the text as a destructive *other* which proscribes the physical and creative space Invisible Man is allowed to populate. The construction of whiteness is made literal in the paint factory which is famous for its 'Optic White' paint. Invisible Man learns that in order to create this perfect whiteness, he must mix it with a single drop of black.

The racial implications of this formula are self-evident as Ellison refutes the possibility, not to mention the value, of racial purity. As Invisible Man mistakenly substitutes the black paint with paint thinner, Ellison depicts the devastating consequences inherent in this image of racial purity: the essence of white gradually dissolves into a diluted and finally invisible and effectiveless nothing.

There is something gruesomely comical about a Trickster figure who is repeatedly manipulated into a new identity and yet Ellison manages to avoid a stultifying or repetitive narrative – that hypostatizing compulsion of virtually obsolete forms which Adorno refers to as the inevitable outcome of the loss of identity between form and meaning. Through his self-realizing narrative, the very nature of the protagonist's development through the multiple identities creates a new harmony. The static and predetermined social roles are reinfused with new meaning and creative function which becomes manifest as that momentum which sustains the character past his various identities and, finally, his invisibility.

This growing recognition of ethnic interdependence (both as a fact but also as a necessary understanding) informed the bebop era, which strove to embrace the possibilities inherent in this mutuality. Ellison's protagonist, however, is still incapable of following the example signified in the paint and continues to move within the hierarchy of the dominant white *other*. Even when Invisible Man is a powerful spokesman and leading figure in the movement, it is his relationship with a white woman that seals the launch into his final crisis of identity. Her perceived extreme otherness from him threatens his own sense of self which is plainly fragmented and could shatter at any moment. In contrast, Toni Morrison's novel *Jazz*, written 45 years after *Invisible Man*, offers a black ethnicity which seeks to define itself from within, and in terms of itself.

In her novel *Jazz*, Toni Morrison chooses to focus on interiority rather than exteriority. As mentioned above, where James Baldwin focuses on the interaction between black and white, investigating the meaning of either category at the junction, and Ellison includes whites mainly to offer oppressive foils to his characters, Morrison seems to exclude white Americans from the space of her book entirely, except to preserve their role as a traumatic though vague other by which blackness is defined.[18] Any white presence in the text – barring one – is relegated to the outskirts of her narrative, enabling her to shift her attention to the relation of individual ethnic identity-making processes and those of a community. The central exception which lies at the heart of the black exclusivity of Morrison's narrative is Golden Gray, a child of mixed race. As will be demonstrated below, Golden Gray's pivotal presence does not upset the process of community-building so crucial in Morrison's text but serves as a reminder of the complexity of African-American history in relation to ethnic identity and thus serves to qualify the dramatic *othering* of whites by blacks that is so common in the text. For Morrison, jazz links the different ways of being black, a link only hinted at as a possibility in Ellison. Much as bebop explores

existing categories in the process of exploding those boundaries they impose, so does Morrison seek to reformulate these categories.

Focusing on the model of performativity highlights the distinction between the explorations of racial and ethnic identity in the novels. In *Jazz* the element of performance takes on new dimensions and new implications. The characters are faced with their own multiple self-identities which reflect against one another and begin to belie the very existence of any *true* self (racial, gendered or individual) lying at the core of human experience. The central characters in *Jazz* are each described in terms of their many selves, each one watching the performance of the other. Violet, called Violent by some after her disruption of the funeral, sits in the drugstore 'sucking malt through a straw wondering who on earth that other Violet was that walked about the City in her skin; peeped out through her eyes and saw other things' (89). As she tries to explain to Felice about 'having another you inside that isn't anything like you', Felice asks:

> How did you get rid of her?
> Killed her. Then I killed the me that killed her.
> Who's left?
> Me.
>
> (208–9)

This is not the self-effacing conflict of identity which as will be described eventually overpowers Rufus in a parallel dilemma of Baldwin's *Another Country*, but a living, breathing, acting character that inhabits the same body and because of the perceived division, poses a violent threat. Joe, Violet's husband, describes a parallel split in identity when he relates how he hunted and finally shot Dorcas, his lover, after she had abandoned him.

> I tracked Dorcas from borough to borough [. . .] Something else takes over when the track begins to talk to you [. . .] if the trail speaks, no matter what's in the way, you can find yourself in a crowded room aiming a bullet at her heart, never mind it's the heart you can't live without [. . .] I had the gun but it was not the gun – it was my hand I wanted to touch you with. (130–1)

In the retelling of their stories, both Violet and Joe distance themselves from the implications of their own actions by formulating a different self from which they are alienated and yet to whom they are intimately related: thus, there is the storyteller, the one self, and the *other* self, each one reflecting and watching the performance of the other. This division inevitably results in destruction in the novel, highlighting the potent dangers of this kind of categorization, of this conception of a cast of roles enacted on the stage of a character which stands in contrast to some essential core. The complexity of the subject makes it thus

highly unstable if allowed to disintegrate but, as will be shown, Morrison successfully recomposes the subject in relation to the object whole with a carefully constructed density.

The power of Morrison's model comes from the contrasting coexistence of these diverse selves. Invisible Man, on the other hand, moved amnesiacally from one mutually exclusive identity to another. The simultaneity of selves in *Jazz* thus heightens the tension of divided subjectivities, moving the racial discourse to a dissonance which demands resolution. Moreover, the kind of divisive danger Morrison points to here is made clearer through its relation to bebop. Morrison's characters are in danger of forever evading a realized self, and being irreconcilably torn asunder by their fragmented selves. This division from within is reflected in the startled hostility with which many of the early bebop audiences met the new form of jazz. The early responses to bebop by audiences were hardly welcoming. Having come prepared for the dancing entertainment of swing, many audiences were alienated by the intellectualized explorations of bebop. Whereas the blues, in all its manifestations, was an inclusive musical form which included elements of virtually every kind of African-American experience, and swing was, at the very least, universal dance music, bebop was one of the first kinds of jazz which could be seen as exclusive, even divisive, within African-American communities.[19]

In addition to its relation to the possibly alienating effect the music had on the audiences, the focus on the divided sense of self shared by many of the characters in *Jazz* emerges from the parallel potential for disintegration within the music itself. Structurally, bebop threw new emphasis on the role of the solo in the musical process. Each musician – sometimes excluding the rhythm section – was given the space to pursue his own musical ideas, extending the solos to unprecedented lengths (except during the early recording days of bebop when the 78rpm formats imposed a three-minute restriction. It is only with Miles Davis's 1951 *Dig* that this began to change and $33^1/_3$ recordings were made (Davis, 1989:147)). The stress on individuality, manifest in the solo, potentially weakened the cohesive force of a musical piece, demanding a concentrated collective effort to avoid the possible fragmentation. One method used to maintain the logic of the piece was the characteristically steady rhythm set by the bass or drum which ran through the work – a beat which, as will be shown presently, has a crucial role in Morrison's *Jazz*, as well as in *Invisible Man*.[20]

The volatile implications of these various kinds of divisions become evident in *Jazz* in the repeated image of the self as disengaged from the body. Violet watches *that* Violet interrupt a funeral to defile the dead Dorcas's face and fight off the men attempting to stop her, with a physical strength this Violet has long lost. Thus, here, the body is not simply a vessel for the self but changes in response to the role being played. This scene is telling not only with relation to Violet's divided sense of self but it illuminates the underlying importance of

the body and the dangers inherent in a racialized perspective which focuses on the body, but, as will be shown below, also the potentially redeeming factors of a more unifying view. Violet knows that Dorcas is dead but feels she must destroy her face as well, for therein lies a threat equal to the live girl herself. Both Joe and Violet are in the business of appearances and so it is not surprising that they both become captivated by Dorcas's visage. Spending their days helping people change or maintain their faces and their appearances, the face of the dead girl becomes the focal point of their pain as her photograph sits on their mantelpiece, variously drawing the one or the other from their sleepless bed. The photograph offers a literal manifestation of that epidermalizing process so prevalent in the novel. While the face looking out at them cannot satisfactorily capture the dead girl, its presence in their home keeps her, and their hunger for her, alive. Joe explains the power of her face over him as he describes her bad skin as '[l]ittle half moons clustered underneath her cheekbones, like faint hoofmarks [. . .] I bought the stuff she told me to, but glad none of it ever worked. Take my little hoof marks away? Leave me with no tracks at all?' (130). It is these tracks which take hold of him as he hunts her down.

But Morrison offers a new dimension to this destructive divisiveness, complicating the alienating exteriority of the body. Dorcas's face becomes more than the mask which pulls Joe in and pulls Violet apart (splitting her into the two Violets), or a visage which with the props of skin bleach, curling iron, cosmetics and tonics, represents the stage for a masquerade in which Dorcas becomes prey, Joe becomes the hunter, and Violet turns wild. Through Morrison's language, the tracks on her skin become mingled with the tracks of music that saturates the narrative: '[Joe] is bound to the track. It pulls him like a needle through the groove of a Bluebird record. Round and round about the town. That's the way the City spins you' (120). By aligning Joe's response to Dorcas with a musical experience that emanates from and encompasses the City itself, Morrison introduces a redeeming link between the individual and the community.[21] The characters cease being puppeteered by an alienating force which directs the roles they act out. Through music a community is formed which resists the inherent danger of two-dimensionality inextricable from the model of performativity. This link is made more explicit in the description of Alice Manfred, Dorcas's aunt, and the effect the protest march has on her.

Alice lives in fear, threatened by the realities of racial hatred and ignorance but also by the possibilities of sexuality and creativity, epitomized in the 'lowdown music': [s]ongs that used to start in the head and fill the heart had dropped on down, down to places below the sash and the buckled belts' (56). Watching the march, she watches the 'tide of cold black faces' protesting those who were killed in the East St. Louis riots, listening to the beat of their drums and clutches the hand of Dorcas, her orphaned niece, and she feels the widening gap between the angers and the appetites represented by the marchers and her own need to contain and protect her niece from them.

> Then suddenly, like a rope cast for rescue, the drums spanned the distance,
> gathering them all up and connected them: Alice, Dorcas, her sister and her
> brother-in-law, the Boy Scouts and the frozen black faces, the watchers on the
> pavement and those in the windows above. (58)

Here, as above, music becomes a unifying force. The fear Alice describes con-
sumes her experience, transforming all other kinds of existence into a direct
threat, effectively isolating her. Although she secretly admired the glamorous
coats which are so suggestive in her mind, she keeps her sentiment hidden,
masked as the contempt with which she speaks of them. It is the rhythm beat
out by the drums which dissipate her fears: '[t]he drums and the freezing
faces hurt her, but hurt was better than fear' (55). Alice was isolated and insu-
lated by her fears but the power of pain forces her to actively participate in her
experiences. The beat of the drums, echoing the driving rhythms of bebop,
forms a community of the many different African-American responses to the
pain of experience, one which Alice can no longer shy away from. She clings
tightly to the rope so that it will protect her from that kind of music which,

> made her hold her hand in the pocket of her apron to keep from smashing
> it through the glass pane to snatch the world in her fist and squeeze the life
> out of it for doing what it did and did and did to her and everybody else she
> knew or knew about. (59)

And yet, it is precisely that rope which links her to the music that – through that
underlying rhythm – becomes the organizing principle of the world in *Jazz*.

In *Jazz*, Morrison complicates the model of performativity by focusing on the
notion of separateness inherent in this model, where some essential self takes
on or puts off a particular role. Morrison points to the relation of this process
to the parallel process of biophysical racism, in that they stress division and
separation. The emphasis on solo improvisation of each bop musician contains
the parallel potential for divisiveness. Instead, Morrison offers a model of unity
in which the divisive forces are not homogenized but reconciled. As I will
demonstrate below, the element of performance is still paramount through the
very act of narration which frames and pervades the numerous narratives of
Morrison's novel. And it is the recurring thematic and structural motif of story-
telling which, through the weaving together of stories of the past into present
moments of creation, further links Morrison's text with bebop. (In this regard,
as both Houston Baker and A. Timothy Spaulding remind us, it is Invisible
Man's inability to incorporate the troublesome narratives so eloquently related
by the many storytellers in the novel – Trueblood, Wheatstraw, Bledsoe, Jack –
that initially prevents him from finding his own voice.)

The very nature of performativity and its implications thus transform the
ethnic or racial process into cultural production, a production that wavers

between a commodified object artifice and the aesthetic subject of art. The models of performativity explored: an ethnic interface which requires a racial common ground to establish a sector of articulation, a self-effacing ethnic assimilation through passing, or the divisive multiplicity of superimposed identities, are indeed all on some level commodified. Johnson's *Ex-Colored* narrator passes in and out of racialized identities primarily as an entertainer; Invisible Man acquires his selves with money or pride (e.g. the battle royale scene on one hand, where he pays for his scholarship with his dignity, or, on the other hand, the money he is given by Jack as he joins the Brotherhood, or Mary's coin-bank in the shape of a black-faced minstrel which he cannot get rid of). However, this potentially dehumananizing commodification is ultimately averted through an emphasis in the works of these very different writers on the creative potential inherent in any performative discourse. Adorno too spoke of the human as being realized in art through beauty and meaning or, the dire alternative, dissoluted through the empty shells of aesthetic form. By making room for creativity in the space of the novels, the writers transform the process of cultural production into a simultaneously humanizing but also a liberatory and community-building tool.[22]

Consonance: ethnic harmonies: performativity as aesthetic creation

Jazz in general, and bebop, in particular, simultaneously embody both a rupture and a continuation of the reality whence they emerge: in its highly allusional nature, bebop is grounded in its cultural context, though its defining resistance to complacency renders it perpetually resistant to this context. Repeating a musical theme or quoting a motif from some musical standard, not only recontextualizes the riff, infusing it with new life and new meaning: through its deliberate distance from the original it creates a subversive link with it, reconfiguring the initial effects, and asserting radical, potentially political, power. Thus, alongside its communally cohesive force, realized through its relation to society, bebop affirms the liberating and radical force contained in the music.[23] Adorno writes that 'art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as "socially useful," it criticizes society by merely existing' (1970: 225–6). Art, for Adorno, is transcendence into that realm where its autonomy and its independence are inherently self-contradictory because of the antagonistic impulses of artifice to cognition and to experience. Herbert Marcuse, another Frankfurt Marxist, suggests that the more innovative and radical the musical interpretation of a given phrase is, the more liberating the music becomes: 'the degree to which the distance and estrangement from praxis constitute the

emancipatory value of art' (1978: 19). Following, through its inherently double character, communal and oppositional, aesthetic creativity can be seen as a viable solution and a performed alternative to the problems inherent in a per- formative conception of racial identity.

Aesthetic creativity – and specifically here, bebop – becomes a negotiation between consent and descent. Werner Sollors writes with relation to *Ex-Colored Man*:

> The "ideal" realization [. . .] for Johnson's [. . .] hero could come about only in a process of *synthesis*, by a fusion of "birthright" and the realm of descent – defined as the legacy of mother, childhood, folk, parish, poverty, education, social vision, and artistic potential – with "mess of pottage" and the world of consent – embodied by manhood, marriage, America, secular world, pica- resque roaming, and financial success.

Crucially going on to suggest that,

> [T]he fusion is seen possible in the process of aesthetic creation. (172)

Countless literary examples focus on this process of aesthetic creation as the key to balancing consent and descent and thus reaching a harmonized sense of ethnicity. The prologue of *Invisible Man* is an intricate contemplative explora- tion by the narrator of a distilled version of his experiences. In contrast to the body of the novel which is told in retrospect, the prologue is related in present tense, at the very culmination of the experiences not yet narrated. The many different identities donned by the narrator through his life are fused into this one moment of creation. It is through the act of writing that the narrator real- izes both his invisibility and his individuality. And it is through the creative process that he makes himself visible: the physicality of the book confirms the protagonist's presence (a confirmation echoed in the closing lines of Morrison's *Jazz*). Significantly, Invisible Man's process of self-realization becomes coherent to him in music. In his questionably stable psychological state, in the midst of a series of surreal hallucinatory episodes, his reality suddenly makes sense to him in the gaps of Louis Armstrong's musical beat, described in terms eerily echoing the rhythmic explorations of bebop.

> Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisi- ble. I think it must be because he's unaware that he *is* invisible [. . .] Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift   and   imperceptible   flowing   of   time,   you   are   aware   of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead.

And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music. (8)

Listening to Armstrong's music provides the protagonist with new parameters with which to understand his surroundings and it is with these that he both reconceptualizes his relationship to the community and is able to realize his individuality.[24]

However, there are clear dangers attendant with this turn to creativity in order to reach self-realization and self-fulfilment. Marcuse's formulation of art and its relation to experience establishes a delicate community-individual balance which is all too easily upset: aesthetic representation is vulnerable to an over-emphasis on rupture or on composition, each would render it either fundamentally ideological (and thus no longer aesthetic but political) or socially incommunicable (isolated in its complete autonomy). As seen from the fate of Ellison's Invisible Man, living alone underground, focusing on art can become dangerously substitutive: the artist becomes isolated as he concentrates on the creation itself, transforming the subject into an object which thereby ceases to communicate or to relate to external experiences. This danger, however, can only be averted through individual experience.

In the beginning of the novel the young protagonist meets a war veteran who tries to enlighten and to warn him. Speaking to Mr Norton, one of the white founders of the college, the veteran says of the protagonist: 'Behold! a walking zombie! Already he's learned to repress not only his emotions but his humanity. He's invisible, a walking personification of the Negative, the most perfect achievement of your dreams, sir! The mechanical man!' (94). Delivered by a patient in an insane asylum, this warning goes unheeded by the uncomprehending narrator. And yet, as seen in the prologue to the novel, Ellison does find a solution, a means to achieve this balance, allowing his protagonist to undergo the inevitably devastating self-realization without being utterly isolated.

Recalling the bebop emphasis on form, it is the lack of awareness that is stultifying and destructive. The protagonist claims that 'to be unaware of one's form is to live a death' (7).

In going underground, I whipped it all except the mind, the *mind*. And the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived. That goes for societies as well as for individuals. Thus, having tried to give pattern to the chaos which lives within the pattern of your certainties, I must come out, I must emerge. (580–1)

Only through self-consciousness and through a realization of form – both in its aesthetic senses and in the metaphorical sense of defining what one is and what one is not – can life ensue. His search for enlightenment through art becomes

explicit in his battle with the electricity company. Literally stealing light, he hopes to battle and overcome his invisibility, affirming his own form and life.

The balance between form and content destabilized through a bebop emphasis on the former, becomes established and concentrated in the very moment of creation, rather than on the finished product, and thus returns the process to its beginning as a performative. This characteristic thus injects kinetic energy into the aesthetic and racial processes and also, by definition, ensures both a spontaneity and a temporally-based ethnic definition which necessarily relies on the dynamic context in which it is enacted. This aspect of performance, the fact that it is live, associates it with the parallel element of improvisation and live performance in bebop. It is the impromptu interpretation (or appearance thereof) of a repeated motif which ensures the newness and vibrancy of the musical expression. By introducing a bop aesthetic into these literary works Ellison and Morrison, and as will be seen, James Baldwin, redress the destructive power of racialized conceptions, in a performative discourse.

The stress on individualized improvisation in bebop performance establishes a creative tension between the individual and the collective. As each musician takes his solo he must find a way of making a new statement within the constraints of the collective. Paradoxically, by choosing a restricted focus and concentrating primarily on the harmonic possibilities underlying a melody, other constraints were abandoned, enabling greater freedom within the proscribed space. This liberatory aspect of bebop, however, required a deliberate, meticulously knowledgeable approach to the musical material, thus linking knowledge or experience with creativity and establishing the intellectualized aspect of bebop. The narrator of James Baldwin's short story, 'Sonny's Blues', listens to his brother playing bop piano and realizes through the music that while the story (the musical, the literary or the nonfictional story) is not new; it is the retelling of it, the performance, that will free them: 'He and his boys up there were keeping it new, at the risk of ruin, destruction, madness, and death, in order to find new ways to make us listen' (1957: 198). The risks are real but so is the power of the music to redeem the characters, move them out of that space of ignorance and ruin, that lack of awareness which sent Invisible Man underground.

These emphases are resonant in Morrison's *Jazz*, where there is a parallel stress on behaviour which strives towards knowledge, a knowledge that is thematically linked to sexuality and the Garden of Eden, and through which racial and ethnic identifications are ultimately brought to bear. This complex formulation is made unambiguously clear as Joe testifies his love for Dorcas:

Anything just for you. To bite down hard, chew up the core and have the taste of red apple skin to carry around for the rest of my life [. . .] I would strut out the Garden, strut! as long as you held on to my hand, girl [. . .] I talk about being new seven times before I met you, but back then, back there, if you was

or claimed to be colored, you had to be new and stay the same every day the sun rose and every night it dropped. And let me tell you, baby, in those days it was more than a state of mind. (134–5)

Here, Joe is willing to make any sacrifice for the knowledge of her, the experience of her, and the love of her. The fruit of knowledge becomes intrinsically related to the positive experience of an *other*, forcing a shift from the racialized *othering* gaze that characterized African-American history. Furthermore, the Garden of Eden is reconfigured as a protected and stagnant seat of ignorance which must be shattered despite the cost of destruction which inevitably follows. The implications of this dramatic reconfiguration and its relation to race become clearer through Morrison's subtle reference to an important essay by LeRoi Jones, 'The changing same' (1966), hinted at in the penultimate sentence of the quoted passage.

In his article, Jones writes about the 'new music' which emerged and gained momentum in the 1960s, the avant-garde explorations of John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, and Sun-Ra, among others, and compares them with the growing popularity of Rhythm & Blues in America. In contrast to what Jones calls the increasing 'whitening' impulse of Rhythm & Blues, he argues that through the New Black Music, the musicians and the audience are transported to another place, 'a place where Black People live'. Thus Jones identifies jazz as a physical space, a region inhabited by African Americans, not unlike the uniquely black space of the City depicted in Morrison's *Jazz*.[25] Jones makes a direct link between the developments of bebop and the explorations of free jazz, suggesting that they are intimately related in the process of self-conscious identification. 'And that's what it's about; consciousness. What are you *with* (the word Con-With/Scio-Know). The 'new' musicians are self-conscious. Just as the boppers were'. In other words, Jones envisages a new space, created through music, in which African Americans can learn to know themselves. 'What is presented is a consciously proposed learning experience'. The envisioned end of this process is '[a] really new, really all inclusive music. The whole people' (1966: 188–9).

Thus, returning to the novel, through his relationship with Dorcas, the process Joe undergoes anticipates the move from bebop to free jazz. The seven transformations he undergoes are resonant of bebop's 'rhythm changes' whereby the musicians improvise harmonically on the chords underscoring the melody, rather than on the notes of the melody themselves. Joe shifts between various African-American experiences, creating a harmony of voices which feed into his narrative (the reader encounters many of Joe's faces: he is the man women feel safe around, he is the adulterer who seduces then kills his mistress, the hunter, the lost orphan, the masculine worker, and the devastated shell of a man).

The suggestion of the phrase already quoted, 'back then [. . .] if you was or claimed to be colored, you had to be new and stay the same every day,' is that

this changing same enclosed an increasingly confining space out of which
African Americans must break. Dorcas learns to recognize the implications of
their relationship as she lies dying, sending Joe the message that '[t]here's only
one apple' (213). Refusing to betray her lover, even though she is shot by him,
Dorcas's message suggests her recognition that love is the key, recalling a fur-
ther passage in the Jones essay:

> what is the *object* of John Coltrane's "Love" . . . There is none. It is for the sake
> of Loving, Trane speaks of. As Ra's "When Angels Speak of Love." [. . .] The
> change to Love. The freedom to (of) Love. And in this constant evocation of
> Love, its need, its demands, its birth, its death, there is a morality that shapes
> such a sensibility, and a sensibility shaped by such moralizing. (1966: 200)[26]

In other words, through love, through constructive relationships with others
which concentrate on a unified sensibility of self, rather than on the alienating
roles stipulated by racializing social and cultural history, a new musical and
moral aesthetic emerges which lays the foundation for a new community.[27]

This appeal to love echoes the haunting plea of the saxophone player in an
early scene of Baldwin's *Another Country*: 'He had a lot to say. He stood there,
wide-legged, humping the air, filling his barrel chest, shivering in the rags of his
twenty-odd years, and screaming through the horn *Do you love me? Do you love
me? Do you love me?*' (18), voicing a question which echoes dramatically through-
out the novel between virtually all of the characters. The raw sexualized image
which characterizes the music is mingled with the musician's stark loneliness,
a human hunger that finds its resolution in the ability of the musician to tran-
scend his isolation and – through the music – to communicate with the other
band members: 'each man knew that the boy was blowing for every one of
them' (18).

The death of Dorcas at the hands of her newly transformed and – in Morrison's
reconfiguration of the Fall – implicitly redeemed lover would seem to contra-
dict this focus on love and community as the key to ethnic reformulation in *Jazz*.
However, hers is the death which, as in the story of the Old Testament, seals the
fate of those displaced, a term resonant of the history of African-American
experience, as well as of the recurring metaphor linking space and jazz, so rele-
vant for this novel.

Conceptualizing jazz in spatial terms offers new insights to the ethnic formu-
lations and ethnicizing processes which take place both in *Jazz* and in *Another
Country*. In both novels, the city itself is perceived in musical terms. As he
wanders uptown, in the opening of *Another Country*, Rufus, a bop drummer who
finds himself devastated by the choices he has made and the trajectory of his
life, describes the rhythm of the city as encompassing all of African-American
experience: '*A nigger*, said his father, *lives his whole life, lives and dies according to
a beat* [. . .] The beat – in Harlem in the summertime one could almost see it,

shaking above the pavements and the roof' (16). He grasps his own state of alienation when he realizes that 'he had fled [. . .] from the beat of Harlem, which was simply the beat of his own heart' (16–7). Thus Baldwin establishes a direct link between music, ethnic self-identification, and space. As a drummer, Rufus lays down the beat, but by abandoning his music, Rufus effectively rejects the beating of his own heart becoming increasingly alienated from his sense of self and from his surroundings. The physicality of the image both anticipates his own suicide and is later taken up in Morrison's text where she considers the destructive implications of focusing on the body as an essentializing mani-festation. This increasingly threatening loss drives Rufus to wander through Manhattan, seeking oases where a socio-musical haven can be temporarily recaptured. The drumbeat which runs through bebop is lost to Rufus but reap-pears as the drums of the protest marchers in *Jazz*, who beat out a rhythm that Alice grasps as a buoy which focalizes different kinds of black experiences. While in *Another Country* Rufus seeks music as an escape from the crushing power of the city, and in *Invisible Man*, the protagonist finds music when he escapes from the city, in *Jazz* the city becomes home precisely through the music.

This difference is related to a distinct difference between the city-space con-structed in the three novels. In the opening pages of Baldwin's novel Rufus crosses all of Manhattan, starting at Times Square, going uptown, then down to Greenwich Village to visit Vivaldo, and finally up to Harlem, where he meets both black and white characters. Similarly, Invisible Man travels the length and breadth of the city, where he too encounters characters of all kinds. His first arrival in Harlem, however, is telling of his own racializing landscape. In con-trast, in *Jazz*, Morrison locates her central narrative around 'Lenox Avenue safe from fays and the things they think up' (11) and 'Up there, in that part of the City [where] the right tune whistled in a doorway or lifting up from the cir-cles and grooves of a record can change the weather. From freezing to hot to cool' (51). Whiteness becomes an alien *other* which haunts the periphery of the characters's lives and imaginations. Morrison excludes the white population which has historically dominated Western literature and focuses on the African-American processes of ethnic self-identification, complicating the conception of blackness as biological or even as performed. These processes culminate in the exchange between Golden Gray and his father, Henry Lestory (Hunters Hunter). Brought up by his white mother and her slave/servant, True Belle (Violet's grandmother), it is only upon reaching adulthood that Golden Gray discovers that his father was a slave. The confrontation between the white-skinned son and the black father offers an alternative way of conceiving race (which focuses on the meeting point of black and white): 'Look. Be what you want – white or black. Choose. But if you choose black, you got to act black, meaning draw your manhood up – quicklike' (173). Faced with the biological fact of his racial makeup, Golden Gray is summoned to disregard the weight of

implications that ancestry imposes and to make a choice and to then be the man he chooses to be. Making a similar argument, Violet laments having 'messed up [her] life': ' "Forgot it was mine. My life." [. . .] "What's the world for if you can't make it up the way you want it?"' (208). Confirming the construction of ethnic identity as presented by Werner Sollors in *Beyond Ethnicity*, Morrison stresses consent and choice as central components of ethnic identity-making processes. The reader never learns which choice Golden Gray makes but the narrator reveals that he undergoes a change of mind, hinting that the transformation was more extensive and dramatic than the dissipation of his hostility, and that he has become Lestory. The implications of Hunters Hunter's surname, Lestory, are self-evident and point to the centrality of storytelling in the novel, which I will elaborate on in the final section of this chapter. The theme of storytelling echoes the central motifs of the novel both in its self-conscious aesthetic concerns and in its urgent link between the past being narrated and the present of narration, a formulation also recalling the structure of bebop and embodying a unifying social force already hinted at in Marcuse's construction of aesthetic representation.

Conclusion: rhythm changes: bebop and narrative structure

In light of the performative discourse which illuminates the novels of Baldwin, Ellison and Morrison, the centrality of jazz to each becomes paramount. Baldwin constructs a performativity quite explicitly linked to bebop which complicates the racial binaries. Through his references to bebop in *Another Country*, Baldwin insists that the ethnic identity-making processes be reconsidered, making room for a positively improvised inter-racial interdependence, as sought in the numerous mixed couples in the novel, a relationship that consciously redresses the often destructive interdependence which characterized American history.

Another Country is a recognizably racialized text in terms of its structure as well as its content, in that ideas of race and ethnicity are explored in virtually every formal element within the novel (i.e. the language, the central themes, the characters and the narrative). Crucially, it is the jazz tradition of improvisation that has clearly informed the narrative structure of Baldwin's novel. Despite a popular misconception, improvisation is far from unique to jazz or African-American music in general and is an important characteristic in numerous other musical traditions. And yet, as Peter Townsend describes in *Jazz in American Culture*, '[o]ne of the peculiar features of Western music during the last 200 years has been its exclusion of improvisation [. . .] European "serious" music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is an ethnomusicological exception in its complete severance from improvisatory methods' (2000: 8).

Thus in relation to the European music alongside which jazz has developed, improvisation becomes one of the key identifying features of jazz. One of the main differences between jazz and other musical traditions which use improvisation is in what Bruno Nettl has called *density*: the number and frequency of reference points within musical structures, fittingly recalling the kind of subject density Adorno described. In jazz a point of reference is, for example, chord changes. Nettl identifies models of jazz as having a relatively high density, in contrast to 'those of Persian music, of medium density, and those of an Arabic *taqsim* or an Indian *alap*, relatively lacking in density' (1974: 13).

Another Country has numerous such points of reference: there are as many as fifteen different shifts in narrative focalization between the five focalized characters: Rufus, Vivaldo, Eric, Cass and Yves. The narrative structure of *Another Country* can be reconstructed in jazz terms in the following manner: Rufus introduces the central motifs of the story, transforming very standard, traditional elements – love, passion, growth, loneliness, pain and death – into a new and racialized story. These motifs are then adopted and reworked by the different characters, each taking part, making it his or her own and then passing it on. Rufus's fate described concisely in the first ninety pages of the novel is a microcosm of the experiences that Vivaldo, Cass and Eric all go through. As the focalization jumps from Vivaldo to Eric, back to Vivaldo, on to Cass, and so forth, it grows and takes on quality and meaning. The novel ends with the brief but hopeful new voice of Yves, Eric's French lover who arrives to join him in New York. Much like the 'rhythm changes' pursued by the boppers, whereby they improvised on standardized chord sequences, changing a standardized melody into a harmonic experience, Baldwin's characters have transformed the central melody into a dense and dynamic construction of Rufus's tale. Similarly, Xam Wilson Cartiér demonstrates the centrality of improvisation both stylistically and within the life of her protagonist/narrator. Trying to make sense of the early death of her father she remonstrates:

> *Wait, Time, don't you see? At just 43 he was kicked into infinity by an off-the-rack/ black/heart attack/and I was only/I'm still trying to improvise/to finishingtouch-up the rest of his life/in the riffs and the runs (BOPBOP/A-REEBOP!) of the chase through the (BOOGEDY/BOODEDY/BOPBOPBOP) neo-blue/everblack/labyrinth life . . . of my dreams!* (14)

The non-linear expostulation riffs on time and the key motifs of a life, using language and playing with it to expose and embody the complexities of art and its representativeness.

In *Invisible Man* the influence of bebop on the structure of the novel is primarily evident in the relation of the part to the whole. Writing about the musical fragment, Adorno discusses its role as the corrective for the impossible concept of the perfect work of art: 'the turn to the friable and the fragmentary is in truth

an effort to save art by dismantling the claim that artworks are what they cannot be and what they nevertheless must want to be; the fragment contains both those elements' (1970: 190). Adorno's description sheds light on Ellison's novel which is fragmented into a series of almost discrete sub-narratives, each exploring a new individuated self. This narrative structure reflects the post-classical impossibility of a cohesive whole (either in Invisible Man's processes of individuation, or even in the medium in which it is enacted – the novel), as well as the necessary impulse towards it. These fragments or, to make the analogy, narrative solos are held together by the single narrative voice which controls the momentum and the nature of the story. It is only as the reader reaches the end of the novel (which is also its beginning) that the core element on which the individuated improvisations took place becomes evident.[28] The narrator could only find his voice through music and could only reconcile his diverse subjectivities through this voice; by delving into the music, unpicking its very structure, he can – as did the beboppers – explore new ways of pushing forward the musical material but also, more importantly, new ways of reconciling the seemingly conflicting conceptions of ethnic identity.

The function of bebop in Morrison's *Jazz* and its application to constructions of ethnicity in the novel point less to the inter-racial community Baldwin envisions or to the divisive intra-racial tensions Ellison studies, and focuses instead on a more introspective cohesiveness within African-American experience. The narrative technique in *Jazz* is a self-conscious reflection on the act of narration itself. The narrative structure explores how sense is created and sustained and how communication is ensured, reflecting on the significance of the very act of aesthetic production. As seen above, these central themes run through the narrative content as well as informing the structural aspects of the novel.

The novel's narrative trajectory weaves in and out of countless stories, anecdotes and accounts, often seeming only loosely related to the central narrative in the traditional organization of a plot. Not entirely unlike the narrative structure of *Another Country*, *Jazz* is ordered along a series of solo narrative voices. Perhaps the main difference between the two is in the nature of the centralized and arguably controlling narrator. In Baldwin's novel, this authoritative voice is a third-person omniscient narrator distanced from the events being related, observing them from outside. Ellison's narrator is a first-person intra-diegetic autobiographical narrator. In contrast, Morrison's narrator is separate from the central narrative but quite obviously intimately engaged with the characters, the community and the events depicted. Hers is a first-person, fallible narrative voice who is implicated in the narrative itself: 'I thought I knew them [. . .] when I was feeling most invisible, being tight-lipped, silent and unobservable, they were whispering about me to each other [. . .] when I invented stories about them [. . .] I was completely in their hands' (220). The self-conscious narrative technique creates a collage of voices which implicate one another in a process whereby the narrative authority emerges from the collective itself

rather than from any one single voice. This inclusive structure mirrors the characteristic intimacy of bebop. Precisely because of its potentially alienating quality, bebop required a much more concentrated engagement – on the parts of the musicians as well as of the audience – for it to communicate successfully. As the jazz bands became smaller, the intimacy of the jam-sessions grew, with the musicians often sitting in a circle facing one another, enhancing the insider-outsider divide but simultaneously suggesting that this divide was surmounted through the collective musical output. This formulation is echoed in the self-conscious storytelling technique which characterizes Morrison's novel.[29] Storytelling is crucial in all of these texts as it becomes, in various manifestations in these three novels, the creative act which can reconcile the divisive forces of racialized thinking.

Through their emphasis on performativity and creative impulses, Ellison, Baldwin and Morrison explore the implications of perceiving ethnicity as a process which relies on consent. Ethnicity as consensus carries with it many potentially destructive as well as productive possibilities: a conception of ethnic identity as a collaborative process rather than an inherited identity opens exciting new avenues for cultural production and the development of a communal aesthetic. However, it problematically suggests a rejection of the history of racial thought which has, for centuries, defined the experiences of white and African Americans. On the other hand, focusing cultural production solely on a purely historicist, backward gaze, even one that crucially rewrites the narrative of history will eventually become stagnant. Both possible outcomes influence the developments of bebop. Toni Morrison's later novel, *Paradise*, pushes these consequences further, examining the aesthetic repercussions of this radical reconception of ethnicity. In that novel, Morrison represents a community that begins to disintegrate from within, morally, socially and physically because of a self-defining principle that has been frozen in time. And yet, she does this using a literary aesthetic that rejects racial identification and thus explores the implications of a post-racial era for the notion of self for a contemporary ethnic community. Already foreshadowed in *Jazz*, one way she reclaims a communally unifying principle is by incorporating elements of free jazz into the fabric of the novel. Thus, Ellison's, Baldwin's and Morrison's novels can be seen as part of a larger project which, by refusing to be bound by categories of creative impulses and introducing jazz into the defining literary aesthetic, begin to destabilize and undermine the divisive borders of social, racialized construals, offering instead a much more complex and diverse cultural model.

Chapter 3

Modes of experience: modal jazz and the authority of experience in Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo,* Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*

By the mid-1950s bebop had already had its short-lived heyday and it would thence remain a fundamental undercurrent of jazz styles, never really to return to the spotlight as such. By 1956, World War II had been over for a decade; Charlie Parker had been dead a year; the jazz epicentre which had moved from Minton's in Harlem to 52nd St. as it gained popularity with white audiences, had already relocated to the burgeoning Greenwich Village. Dizzy Gillespie had gone on to apply the not-so-new ideas of bebop onto the big-band context; the *Brown vs. Board of Education* legislation ending legal sanction for the 'separate but equal' policy was two years old; the Cold War was a frightening reality in American society, especially in the frantically anti-communist McCarthy witch-hunts; and the United States had already claimed a stake in Vietnamese politics in what would turn into one of the more violently controversial and divisive foreign policies of American history.

The 1950s, 60s and 70s were decades of social, political and cultural unrest and upheaval in the United States. This was no less true for the African-American community which saw the rise and fall of different but powerful leaders (particularly, Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Medgar Evers and Elijah Muhammad). The frustration of the post-World War II era was compounded by the increasingly dire conditions of the urban population centres in the inner-cities. While the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 symbolized a crucial change in American social policy, it all too frequently ignited latent racism in white America, leading to the revival of the Ku Klux Klan and to a nation-wide conflagration of race-based crimes.

Nevertheless, by the 1960s, the role of African Americans in the fabric of American society was recognized – by whites and blacks alike – in ways not seen in the early decades of the century. Changes in policy like those precipitated by the 1954 legislation proved all the more frustrating because they articulated a growing acceptance of African Americans as social equals that was hardly recognizable outside the realm of the legal documents. The social unrest resulting

from prolonged social and economic subordination, together with fermenting frustration at persistent and violent evidence of racism, began organizing itself, taking the form of bus boycotts, sit-ins and 'freedom rides', and gradually grew to a climax in the early 1960s, peaking momentarily in the March on Washington in 1963 but finally exploding in the race riots that took hold of various cities including Harlem (1964), Watts (1965), Newark (1967) and Detroit (1967).

The assassination of Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr, in 1968, which followed the assassinations of President Kennedy and Medgar Evers in 1963, and of Malcolm X in 1965, effectively marked the end of a unified attempt at a peaceful – if forceful – opposition to white racist dominance by African-American communities. The mid-1960s saw a growing number of African Americans turning away from Christianity and towards an increasingly appealing Islam. The Black Muslim Movement, under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad (and later in 1976, the Nation of Islam, under Louis Farrakhan, that emerged after the former organization broke up) offered a new way to consolidate African-American social and cultural values into a political force. The Black Muslim community enabled African Americans to practice a religion that was not weighted down by the history of slavery, subordination and race that defined Christianity.

Moreover, the apparent failure of a policy of non-violence, together with what had become an unbearable frustration spanning the many African-American communities, led to the development of a new African-American militantism, manifest in such organizations as the Black Panthers who emphasized violence as the most effective way to push forward black-American values. These aims resonated across America where people began to devote their energies (creative as well as social and political) to forming what became known as the Black Power movement, a movement that was immediately associated with a parallel exploration and formulation of Black Aesthetics.

The works of African-American artists informed by the Civil Rights movement and by the political articulation of a Black Aesthetic can be understood in new ways when considered in light of a tripartite conceptual prism: the racial politics of the 1960s and 1970s; avant-garde and jazz modality; and the implications of Adorno's critique of serialism which will be described below. The resulting conceptual form encloses the three primary texts which stand at the centre of my analysis: Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972), Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Song of Solomon* (1977).

In her essay, 'Postmodern blackness' (1990), bell hooks writes about the potential usefulness of negotiating the differences between white (and masculine) cultural theories and black experience. She suggests that, rather than rejecting constructs such as postmodernism because of their construction by a male European intelligentsia, these constructs can be adjusted to reflect on African-American experience and thus give authority and insight to this experience. In her article, hooks makes direct reference to the 1977 feminist collection of essays *Authority of Experience*. This concept is a useful way of thinking about

the construction of African-American ethnic identities in the 1970s in America. As hooks writes, rejecting notions of essentialism need not imply that ethnic self-identification is impossible. I have discussed the notion of performativity and choice, or consent, earlier; *authority of experience* can be seen as an extension of that ethnic self-conscious choice.

Marrying this focus on experience as a basis for choice in the ethnic identity-making processes with the innovations of modal jazz, and organizing these along key Adornian constructs of a socialized subject which will be outlined presently, generates a productive framework with which to explore Morrison's and Reed's novels. From Adorno's model three primary ordering principles may be extracted: a tension between the part and whole, a unique temporality of the individuated agency model which will be explained below, and the fundamental but precarious social truth-value these provide for the work. The resulting analysis illuminates a textual reading as well as it invokes and colours a methodical examination of textual elements: the narrative structure, the language, and the relationship of the reader and the narrative, respectively.

Modal jazz

The post-bop era, roughly identified as beginning in the 1950s, saw the emergence of hugely varying jazz innovations (among these were West Coast jazz, smooth jazz, soul jazz, cool jazz, hard bop, avant-garde and free jazz, and more recently, countless kinds of fusions). The radical social and political changes that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century were paralleled by similar explorations within the realm of music, which reflected the extremes and potentially violent paradigms within the socio-cultural or political arenas. The dramatic musical developments, the innovative musical explorations and the resulting sounds often perceived as cacophony led many critics to refer to these musical expressions as 'anti-jazz'. In this chapter I will be considering the most dramatic developments in jazz that took place just after and largely in response to bebop, leading to the gradual materialization of free jazz. The experiential difficulty of what became known as free jazz was compounded by the resistance of free jazz to any easy characterization that could lead to a coherent musical category. (It is symptomatic of scholars writing about this jazz that they generally resort to focussing their analysis on a discussion of individual musicians or composers. Sometimes, this will even be reduced to the level of specific periods in the musicians's creative life, or even to particular recordings.[1]) To elucidate the innovations of free jazz, I should like to focus first, in this chapter, on a mediating moment of jazz that moves away from the breakneck harmonic demands of bebop to what is at once both more mellow and more melodic: modal jazz. This is particularly true of its early stages; later works such as Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* and *Impressions* already demonstrate the musically challenging and innovative possibilities which the modal form enables.

Despite the clear aural differences between the early modal melodies and the arguably anti-melodic improvisations of free jazz, the two stages are intimately related in the manner in which they move stridently away from tonality (modal jazz as it moves forwards through modes, rather than around its tonic; and free jazz which often dispenses with tonal structures altogether) and from chordal progressions as the central logic for the improvised solo. Moreover, they both create space for rhythmic densities and explorations that bebop and earlier forms of jazz did not yet allow. These similarities notwithstanding, when considering the broad spectrum represented by free jazz, a distinction becomes useful. For the purposes of this chapter I will attempt to set the rather fluid boundaries and define the two periods by relating each to the prominent innovators of each sub-genre and to the varying politics from which they emerged. Thus, in this chapter I shall focus on the earlier explorations into motifs and melody, and the shift to modality, associated primarily with the early periods of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, as well as with such musicians as Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter. Free jazz, on the other hand, to which I will return in the next chapter, refers to the more complex and paradoxically introspective ideas of collective improvisation, tone-colourization and the drastic redefinition of the roles and structures of the rhythm section which generally characterized some experimental jazz after 1959; these ideas were largely introduced and explored at length by musicians such as Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra.

Miles Davis's revolutionary album, *Milestones* (1958), was a turning point in the world of jazz. The title piece was an unprecedented recording where the structural guideline for the music was not the search to stretch those boundaries of (mainly) diatonic harmony, as in bebop; rather this was a concentrated exploration in the use of different modes. Bebop's central innovation was in the study of harmony, working principally from within one key and using the various predetermined chords – or deliberate manipulations of these chords – as the basis for improvisation. These new musicians, on the other hand, with Miles Davis at the forefront, explored the implications of shifting from one type of scale to another.[2] In what became known as modal jazz, the emphasis was placed on different modal sound worlds, generally effecting a harmonic stasis. The defining characteristic of a scale is the scheme of intervals between the notes in that scale. So, for example, the standard diatonic scale – that is, generally, major and minor scales – used traditionally in early jazz is structured along successive white keys of the piano, creating a pattern of intervals of whole-tones or semi-tones. (Any major scale, for example, is structured thus: tone-tone-semitone-tone-tone-tone-semitone.) A chromatic scale, in contrast, is an evenly distributed scheme with a semi-tone between each note. In other words, on a piano, to play the chromatic scale is simply to play all the black and white keys. By shifting scales, or modes, in the middle of a musical piece the musician effectively disrupts the recognized logic of the music, offering a new logical basis in its stead. There is, in tonality (that is, a scale with a key-note, or *tonic*),

a directionality and a momentum defined by the tonal centre, a pattern of tension and release. In modal jazz, this overarching impulse towards tonal resolution is removed across the piece, though it is preserved within each mode.

This structure opens a new spectrum of improvisation that moves away from rapid chord changes and increasingly complex harmonic virtuosities; the only restrictions or guidelines imposed on the musicians are those of the mode, and no longer those prescribed by the chords. The momentum in this kind of improvisation results from the tension between the simple or sparse chordal progression (by the piano player, for example) which underlies the melodic exploration (often across modes) being played over it. In Miles Davis's groundbreaking album, *Kind of Blue* (1959), this system guides the interaction between the different musicians. If in a bebop jam-session the soloist embarked on a concentrated, complex, dense exploration of the harmonic possibilities within the scale, these avant-garde musicians took their cues from the scale itself, opening up new melodic possibilities.[3]

Describing Miles Davis, Ekkehard Jost writes that, 'above a minimum of chord changes he was improvising in free-flowing lines, and was much more interested in melodic, horizontal continuity than in the harmonic structure' (1974: 20).[4] Indeed, one of the implications of modal improvisation is that by abandoning the vertical structure of harmonic improvisation, the traditionally recognizable temporal signposts were abandoned: 'in modal improvisation the listener lost familiar aids to orientation. The abandonment of functional harmony made traditional formal patterns [based on 12 bars, for example] obsolete, and a readily comprehensible time-division went with them' (31–2). In other words, Jost explains, 'individual improvisations are not given a different length by the soloists playing different numbers of choruses (as in traditional jazz), but by their expanding or contracting the periods on the various modes within one chorus' (21–2). Thus, eliciting the frequent objection by jazz critics to the perceived extended length of the pieces, modal jazz actually experimented with alternative divisions of time. The shift in musical language – modes, rather than chords, become the syntactical building block – results in the inevitably asymmetrical temporal order of modal music. This product of modality creates a significant link between temporality and language, the literary implications of which I shall discuss below.

Adorno, serialism and the model of individuated agency

Reading Adorno's writing on music in socio-musicological terms, Robert Witkin formulates Adorno's work on Schoenberg into a model which he calls Individuated Agency, describing it as follows:

> In the "individuated agency" model [. . .] attention shifts from the macro-structure to its constitutive elements, each element identified by its functional

character, as an action being brought off [. . .] that is, each action or event-element is identified by what it "does" or what it "affords", and each structure or organisation is constituted by actors as integral to the business of bringing off actions and making sense. (1998: 105)

In other words, where in earlier models I have adopted – classical individuation and tonal irony – the whole was understood as a composite end and process in motion; here, it becomes an external macrocosmic framework within which each socialized part becomes in itself a cohesive (sub) society defined, created and perpetually recreated by activity. Any semblance of an objectified order dissolves with each new moment of interaction between the particles.

This development can be seen to have culminated in the revolutionary twelve-tone technique developed by the composer Arnold Schoenberg.[5] However, the analogy is not a simple one. On one hand, the conditions for resisting the confines of tonality are established, in the sense that there is no predetermined order or hierarchy of the tones; each series is completed (i.e. once all the notes have been played) and then recreated, thus beginning a new moment. And yet on the other hand, the twelve-tone compositional technique remains, by definition, a highly controlled structural technique. Twelve-tone replaces the domination of the subject by the tone with one by a series. Adorno describes this as "[e]nchaining music by virtue of unchaining it":

a liberation which grants it unlimited domination over natural material [. . .] The limitation of the entire piece to the intervals presented in the row recommends that these be comprehensively deployed so that the tonal space be narrowed as little as possible, and that the greatest possible number of combinations be realized [. . .] Twelve-tone melody is indebted to this hypo-statization [of the number twelve] for its liberation not only from the preponderance of the single pitch, but also from the false natural force of the effect of the leading tone and of an automated cadence. (1958: 71–2)

In other words, by shifting the defining focus of the musical composition from the single pitch (the tonal centre) to the anti-hierarchical intervallic system of the twelve-tone scale the music escapes the binding implications of tonality. Thus the liberation of the subject from the objectifying force inherent in tonality paradoxically reinserts the subject into a similarly binding framework, but one that desires a constant and dynamic resistance to it.

Furthermore, twelve-tone technique enables a full integration of the part with the whole. This, in stark contrast to the dramatic resistance of classical tonality to such a reconciliation between the object and the subject. The classical resistance, Adorno claims, truthfully reflects a parallel social impossibility of resolving the tension between the whole and the part. However, it is this tension that ironically enabled a precarious balance between the forces. Twelve-tone

technique, on the other hand, collapses this distance and requires a reconfiguration of the structural and socializing terms.

Writing elsewhere about the absolute necessity of recognizing music's specific context and considering it within that context, Adorno describes the fluidity of musical material and the role of technique (which is his term for that meeting between history and structure) in each composition[6]:

> The state of technique appears as a problem in every measure which [the composer] dares to conceive: with every measure technique as a whole demands of him that he do it justice and that he gives the single correct answer permitted by technique at any given moment [. . .] His efforts find fulfilment in the execution of that which his music objectively demands of him. But such obedience demands of the composer all possible disobedience, independence, and spontaneity. This is the dialectical nature revealed in the unfolding of the musical material. (1958: 36–7)

The composer is thus compelled to comply with the demands of the technique and of the musical material itself, and yet, it is precisely these which demand of him a creative autonomy that can realize the subject-object dialectic. These demands, particularly as the music moves past Viennese Classicism and through twelve-tone technique, reveal and create new complexities in the construction of the subject as it subsequently – and simultaneously – becomes a system of countless sub-divisions.

There is a risk at play here. Schoenberg's revolutionary technique effectively embodies the pathological domination by the subject and its intra-subjectivity. The danger of this pathology affects the composer, musicologist, sociologist (all three disciplines linked to this discussion), or, by implication, the author, who through his involvement with the complexity of the particle, may lose sight of the primary end: a creative project that seeks to grasp the ability of the collective to offer an explanation and an expression of the subject. Writing about Schoenberg's Fourth String Quartet, Adorno explains:

> The *necessity for continuation* is all the greater since the continuation itself is dependent upon the basic row which has exhausted itself as such [. . .] continuation disavows the inescapable claim of twelve-tone music that it is equidistant in all its moments from a central point [. . .] The true quality of a melody is always to be measured by whether or not it succeeds in transforming the spatial relations of intervals into time. Twelve-tone technique destroys this relationship at its very roots. [A]ll intervallic relationships are absolutely determined by the basic row and its derivatives. (My emphasis. 1958: 73–5)

The twelve-tone technique creates a tightly woven net of elements – each element is a row, not a single tone as in earlier models – which are interrelated along both horizontal and vertical dimensions.[7] Thus in his analysis of twelve-tone

technique Adorno offers a complex model which collapses the whole into a new series of wholes, within which the sub-particles are predetermined by the logic of the series itself. The danger in this lies, of course, in the impulse of the music to crumble into endless sub-systems of momentary subjectivities which do not retain social truth-value. The success of the music, then, becomes dependent on the 'necessity for continuation' which belies the systematization of the series-structure.

Three central concerns may be extracted from this brief abstract of Adorno's writing on serialism. The first and primary aspect on which Adorno concentrates is the part-whole configuration. In serialism, the part becomes a much more complex entity than was allowed in the earlier tonal models. As described, this part is paradoxically both dominated by the whole, through its overpowering structuring impulse, and undermines this overpowering totality through its own complexity and temporality. This dynamic relationship, that is both in constant flux and highly controlled and hypostatized from above by the structure of serialism, offers useful terms with which to think about the three novels on which I am focusing. They all demonstrate clear manifestations of this dynamic tension, in particular in their relation to melody and in the narrative structure which reflects the modal organization of early avant-garde jazz.

Temporality and rhythm relate to the second important point in Adorno's treatment of serialism. Whereas in the earlier musical models discussed, the defining structure of a piece will remain predetermined and static throughout, in twelve-tone technique – not unlike the shift in temporal logic in modal jazz – at each new moment the essential nature of that moment will be redefined. Similarly, in the texts of both Reed and Morrison, the rhythm of the narrative, as well as the tempo of the language itself, suggest new approaches to time; as will be seen, this temporal shift is linked in the novels to paradigms of commemoration and to alternative ways of understanding and revising narratives of history.

Finally, a third central Adornian concern of serialism concentrates on the resulting problematic relation of the aesthetic expression and Adorno's notion of social truth. To him the ultimate worth of a piece is directly proportionate to its social relevance. A musical piece that spirals inwards in endlessly changing subjectivities will, by its very nature, fail to contain within it any functional and valid relation to objective social truth.[8] By implicating the listener/reader, involving her in a process of dynamic interaction with the piece itself, the music/text avoids this socially fruitless hyper-subjectivity. Instead, one might consider the implications of compound subjectivities: the music/text spirals not inwards but outwards, enabling, requiring even, a multiplicity of 'now's – both temporal and interpretive.

Melodic narrative

The unique temporality implicated by modality can be literarily related to the narrative structure of a text. Wherein music *melody* refers to the progression of

notes through time, in a text it can be associated with the particular ordering of events, whether following the chronology of their occurrence or any other ordering principle, which clearly dramatically affects the experience of the text. By subverting the chronological order through repetition, deliberate ambiguity, conscious confusion of linear time or through any other such method, the narrative structure calls attention to itself as well as to the narrative being related.

In his analysis of John Coltrane's modal improvisatory techniques, Ekkehard Jost offers the following description:

> Except for the theme, all formal schematism in [Coltrane's] *India* is given up in favour of procedurally developing structural contexts, *their organizational development dependent both on the spontaneous creative power of the individual musicians, and on their willingness and ability to integrate their creative potential into a larger whole* [. . .] No longer does the modal material bind the whole piece together; instead, it functions as a starting and landing point for melodic excursions. (My emphasis. 31)

This explicit reference to a part-whole construct brings me back to the Adornian model which I refer to as *individuated agency*. In modality, then, instead of having complex interactions between the existing components – as in the harmonics of bebop, playing different variations on the same notes – here the aim and the method of improvisation is to introduce alternative modes: moving from one system of notes to the next within the predetermined systemic logic that defines the piece as a whole, precisely that 'starting and landing point' for the narrative excursions. (This overarching logic should not be confused with the defining qualities within one mode. By selecting a particular scale in which to play, the intervals between the notes on the scale are predetermined and known. The very nature of modal jazz, however, adopts a systemic perspective which experiments with the nature of systems: moving from one scale to the next, each time selecting a different system of intervals.) This section will demonstrate three possible textual manifestations if this structure.

A modal jazz reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, for example, focuses first and foremost on that defining frame of reference presented in a thrice repeated passage from a young child's school-book with which the novel opens. This is followed by a fourth repetition spread out across the novel, with one part of the passage given at varying intervals and serving as an epigraph for the narrative to follow. The effect of this highly self-conscious technique is constantly to remind the reader that she is reading a constructed tale. This self-conscious narration relates directly to the politics of the text and the ideological context in which the author was immersed when *The Bluest Eye* was written. Advocates of Black Aesthetics demanded and proclaimed the autonomy and creative freedom to reclaim and relate African-American history (and the project did very

much focus on a single over-arching story). Not unlike the Adornian notion of cultural autonomy which dialectically demanded a recognition of its own context in order to ever be truly free, this move towards aesthetic and political independence was circumscribed within the broader American context. For the most part, these cultural activists accepted this context and were fighting to reposition themselves in it, identifying themselves as Americans but seeking to reconfigure this identity. Although by the 1960s African-American creative output had already been steadily rising for some decades, Black Arts came as an uncompromising demand to formally break from distinct, white, European cultural demands and create something quintessentially black. Indeed, the primary theme of Morrison's novel considers the jarring inappropriateness of blue eyes as a model of beauty for African Americans.

Morrison's choice to frame her work with this particular passage highlights the extent of her departure from these traditions, through its subversion of them, and warrants a rather lengthy quotation. The first appearance of the passage is as follows:

> Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See Mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play. (1)

The opening passage sets out the terms and motifs dealt with in the novel: money, love, family, motherhood, fatherhood, leisure (games, entertainment and the perversion of leisure which all function in the novel) and language itself.

Not unlike the solo of each musician which differed in length and speed but was centrally defined by the repeated modalities, from one mode to another, Morrison repeats the same passage three times in three different ways, in the opening of *The Bluest Eye*, and a fourth throughout the novel, each time stripping the passage of one of its formal characteristics. Each iteration reveals something more about the narrative, playing with effects of language, genre, style and structure, demanding a dynamic reading engagement. The introductory passage presents a child's reader: simple, innocent, bland. In the first repetition, Morrison removes all capitalization and punctuation from the passage. Plausibly meant to represent a child singing out nonsensically, the very fact of

the verbatim repetition so early in a novel, with no clear reason, is disconcerting. The absent punctuation emphasizes its own function when present: making sense out of nonsense, order out of chaos. Thus Morrison successfully introduces the theme of sense or meaning: how is a reader trained to make sense of a textual environment and, by implication, how can anything make sense when all the rules of order (familial and social as well as linguistic and structural) are broken, as the reader soon discovers they are in the novel. In the third iteration the author eliminates all word divisions, making the passage one long virtually unreadable jumble of letters. The disorder has increased as the narrative voice approaches an hysterical note. The text has strayed from innocent childishness to an ominous perversion of language and of sense. As the novel progresses, each section is headed by a sentence from this opening passage. This time the paragraph is delivered intermittently, haltingly, each section giving the epigraph new meaning by stripping it of its conventional set of associations.[9] In his instructive, if somewhat broad, analysis of Morrison's jazz aesthetic, 'Jazzing It Up A Storm', Alan Rice explicitly aligns Morrison's use of this passage with jazz, in a manner that affirms a specifically African-American sensibility:

> The title at the beginning of each chapter cuts back to the reading primer [. . .] The technique of cutting back is obviously not specific to Morrison's prose style; however, whereas writers coming from an Anglo-American tradition might think of such techniques in visual terms (the cutting and montage in film for instance), Morrison's use of it is related to its application in the African-American musical tradition. Flashbacks then can be interpreted as not merely visual, but as a continual cutting back to an earlier event as the musician returns intermittently to an old theme.[10]

It is by means of the context of the larger jazz aesthetic, which plays such a central role in Morrison's work, that this ethnicized difference is explained and identified.

As in the music then, the Adornian relation of the part to the whole is invoked and constantly revised as each 'cutting back' recontextualizes the moment of the subject (i.e. the part), revising in turn the relationship to the whole.[11] This structure is reflected in the narrative structure of *The Bluest Eye*: each prefatory sentence has a particular effect at that moment in the novel, creating a set of expectations that follow both from the preceding chapter and from the epigraphic remark. Moreover, by returning the reader's attention to the opening passages of the novel, the divergent strands of the narrative are subtly drawn into a single, intimately linked, though internally diverse and dynamic, unit. Finally, as the reader completes each section and encounters a new epigraph taken from the novel's opening she must re-assess her understanding of the epigraph's function: repeatedly evaluating whether her expectations were fulfilled and if not, how not, and why, and how this affects her understanding of

the new epigraph. This increasingly challenging reading process echoes the textual progression at the opening of the novel where, as Donald B. Gibson has argued, the reader is forced to learn new modes of reading. These processes begin again at the next prefatory moment, where a new set of interpretations and expectations is inevitably established. Morrison produces a parallel effect in her later novel, *Song of Solomon*, where, too, the individual narrative components relate in a particular way to their surrounding textual moments but take on altogether new levels of meaning when related back to the whole.

The analogy with modal jazz is made clear in the narrative structure of *Song of Solomon* in its systemic aspects as well: resisting a single overarching tonal scheme that predetermines the components included in the piece, the novel explores shifting narrative kernels, which can be compared to tonal centres. Its structure is determined primarily by the melodic relation of one element to the next, within the shifting focal perspectives. *Song of Solomon* is composed of four primary narrative strands, akin to musical modes: Milkman's growth from birth to maturity; a detective/adventure narrative about stolen gold; the story of Pilate and Macon Dead's childhood and their father's murder; and the story of language, of race and of origin. Each of these narratives is intimately related to the other as these four central histories are composed of multiple layers of storytelling: the central narrator telling a story about a character who tells a story about other stories. This complex structure is created by constant shifts in narrative focalization. The narrative voice constantly shifts from a heterodiegetic omniscient narrator, to the third-person homodiegetic focalization on various characters, including Macon Dead, Milkman, Pilate, Ruth and First Corinthians.

Moreover, the temporal order of the plot does not follow a linear chronological logic; time moves round and round in a circular motion. In the first chapter alone, the temporal narrative focus shifts at least sixteen times: moving from the opening scene in 1931 where Mr Smith the insurance salesman is about to jump off a building, back in time to 1896–1918 and the history of naming Not Doctor Street, back to 1931 – a day after Mr Smith's suicide, back a day to his suicide, then to recollections of his life, to his suicide, to the next day and the birth of Milkman Dead, and so on, back and forth alternately, reaching as far forward as the end of the decade and as far back as Pilate's birth and her naming. These constant temporal and narrative fluctuations create a continually spiralling narrative that repeatedly turns back on itself, potentially creating a sense of stasis as it returns to the same moment. Paradoxically, these iterations create the underlying momentum of the text: the central narrative strands stand as the foundation underneath the temporal excursions where the telling and the retelling revisit these strands, ultimately propelling the narrative forward.

There is an overall momentum in the novel that is directed by the natural linearity of Milkman's growth to maturity. This primary narrative that drives the

novel forward, however, is constantly resisted by the structural, thematic and temporal move backwards. And yet this resistance is created subtly: superficially, the novel could be read as a straightforward *bildungsroman*, one that is occasionally but unobtrusively interrupted by narrative interjections. A closer investigation reveals the intricate density of narrative layers. Each layer and interjection makes sense in relation to the narrative moment at which it was introduced, but also then makes new sense in relation to a story related earlier, adding additional meanings retrospectively to the earlier story as well.

One example that clarifies this pattern is the sub-plot of Robert Smith, introduced in the opening sentence of the novel: 'The North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance agent promised to fly from Mercy to the other side of Lake Superior at three o'clock' (3). The narrator goes on to describe the note Mr Smith had left, his life as an insurance agent, and the scene of his death. This episode is beautifully depicted, moving from Smith's 'wide blue silk wings' to the flurry of red velvet rose petals settling on the snowy ground around a small crowd where stood the pregnant Ruth Foster and her sister-in-law, Pilate Dead, singing:

> *O Sugarman done fly away*
> *Sugarman done gone*
> *Sugarman cut across the sky*
> *Sugarman gone home . . ..*
>   (6)

This scene quickly moves to and on from the birth of Milkman Dead – arguably the central character of the novel. Any questions as to the success of this attempt are answered a few pages and five or six years later in the novel, when Freddie the janitor's 'now famous' scream is repeated: 'Mr. Smith went splat!' (23). The themes of flight, of death, of song and of storytelling are thus introduced immediately, though the reason for Smith's suicide and the meaning behind his note are given much later in the novel, after he has already been virtually forgotten, easily dismissed as an insignificant character that functioned as a literary device. When Guitar Bains explains to Milkman about the organization of the Seven Days, the brief mention of Smith guides the reader back to the opening of the novel, causing her to revisit the initial reading of that scene. This incremental disclosure of information and the withholding and revealing of knowledge in a deliberate and controlled manner is a technique used repeatedly in Morrison's novel. I have selected one of the more obvious examples, but this device recurs throughout; the Dead Post Office, Pilate's brass-box earring and Porter's drunken episode are only three examples where the narrative casually discloses one fact that is easily overlooked or underplayed and is later revealed to be a crucial thematic component. Thus the process of re-interpretation is deliberately complicated. The mention of Mr Smith at this later point in the novel reflects back on the earlier episode, a retrospective process whereby the function

of the scene and its initial interpretation must be re-examined, in light of the new information. (Thus, not only does the early scene take on new relevance, but in turn the deliberate initial inconsequentiality of its early positioning becomes imbued with meaning.) The very process of reading, then, manifests the central theme of reading and interpretation, as well as memory, or 're-memory' as Morrison calls it elsewhere. In this particular instance, the initial anonymity of Mr Smith and the forgetability of his suicide illustrate the main tenets of the Seven Days to which, we learn, Mr Smith belonged.

The Seven Days is an underground organization of exactly seven black members, one for each day of the week, that exacts revenge for racist crimes by repeating them against white victims. The group insists on anonymous and secretive retribution that mirrors the initial crime, a retribution they ostensibly justify with love – love of the race. Recalling the novel's opening scene in the conversation between Guitar and Milkman both transforms the opening episode into a manifestation of the Days's principles and gives a sense of continuity to the organization and ominous violence that underlies the text, alerting the reader that more is happening than meets the eye. I will be discussing memory and forgetfulness at length below. Suffice it to say here that the ability to forget and the need to remember are central in African-American history and culture and thus their reflection in the very structure of Morrison's novel is vital.

Ishmael Reed's novel, *Mumbo Jumbo,* offers a third possible manifestation of modal jazz in literature. In a passage quoted above, Ekkehard Jost describes the 'melodic excursions' of modal jazz, a configuration which enables a revisitation of what is often seen as the use of collage in Reed's novel (recalling the ethnically determined terminological shift Alan Rice encourages, adopting a musical rather than a visual set of images for Morrison's writing). In *Free Jazz,* Jost writes that, 'in modal improvisation the listener lost familiar aids to orientation' (31). This sense of confusion and alienation provoked by avant-garde jazz is echoed in the initially disorienting experience of reading *Mumbo Jumbo.* The novel has two beginnings and ends with a partial bibliography that follows the conclusion of the narrative. It is riddled with illustrations, photographs, footnotes, newspaper articles, signs, advertisements, diagrams, and is printed in a plethora of different fonts, representing telegraphs, newsprint and handwritten letters, together with a plentiful use of bold fonts and italics for various purposes throughout. The density of these widely varying mediums is initially startling, even distracting. Not unlike the processes described in the two Morrison novels, however, the reader is gradually taught how to read. As the novel progresses, the reader becomes accustomed to these rapid shifts in pace and narrative technique and learns both to question and to accept the wide variety of narrative sources. Even without these visual and typographical images – which would strip the narrative of a crucial dimension of its process of storytelling – the novel remains a highly complexly structured text that defies the linearity of traditional prose.

The opening chapter of the novel, which precedes the title page and publication details, introduces five narrative modes which are then teased out and interplayed across the text. The first mode is one that is a recognizable though meticulously defamiliarized standard narrative. This opening both creates and subverts the reader's expectations. For example, the third-person narrator opens the novel by introducing a number of characters, primarily the Mayor of New Orleans, 'A True Sport', and Zuzu, 'local doo-wack-a-doo and voo-do-dee-odo fizgig' (3). By the end of this chapter, however, these two, Clem – the doctor who was showing them around, and indeed the whole quarter become infected with what is described as an 'anti-plague' called Jes Grew, with only the Mayor reappearing once briefly in the rest of the novel, thus early on leaving the narrative without who we imagine is its protagonist. It soon emerges, however, that the central character (in the sense that it is the primary focus of the novel and the agent of much of the action) is, in fact Jes Grew – the anti-plague that 'enlivened the host. [. . .] Jes Grew is electric as life and is characterized by ebullience and ecstasy' (6).

This rather murky elucidation is given by the second narrative mode. This mode, depicted in italic fonts, is a partially omniscient narrative, predominantly focalized on the still unidentified Wallflower Order and on Jes Grew itself. The narrator explains that '*Jes Grew is seeking its words. Its text. For what good is liturgy without a text?*' (6). This becomes the key to the novel's progression. Jes Grew is an epidemic that gradually overtakes the United States in an unrelenting search to be reunited with its text. This search for a language as the only agent that will reconcile the destructive force of Jes Grew with its productive force is particularly significant for African-American history. The sweeping search for text and for language does not conflate or equate the two but constructs a complex relation between them. The text, here, is a religiously inflected one and is sought after as the source of meaning. In the novel, the text is inextricable from its manifestations in and implications on language (as is evident both through the title of the novel, *Mumbo Jumbo*, which will be discussed below, and also through the reference to hieroglyphics: Abdul is learning and developing a new system of communication – importantly, the visuality of hieroglyphics appeals to sensibilities different from those applied in Standard English, thus further destabilizing the boundaries and categories of communication). As the reader is told, an earlier quest to recover the text and language of Jes Grew broke out in the 1890s but was unfruitful, and, moreover, as has been demonstrated throughout this book, this has been an on-going project in African-American cultural expression: trying to find a way by which a traumatic past can be articulated productively, neither silenced nor giving reign to its destructive potential. This explanatory statement claiming that the anti-plague is searching for its text acquires additional layers of meaning when it is immediately followed not by text but by an image (7) – the third narrative mode.

It is naturally difficult to discuss a visual image in linguistic terms. The frequent presence of widely varying types of images in *Mumbo Jumbo* suggests a deliberate complication of the narrative process. The novel does not seek a translation of the visual into the linguistic. Rather, the images serve to add dimensions of narration that go beyond words into the story, a story of African-American history which is both literally and figuratively unspeakable. This mode of narration requires an alternative way of reading that incorporates the different narrative modes, offering a richer, more accurate reflection on the multi-dimensionality of history.

Nevertheless, without collapsing the visual into the textual realm, or suggesting a direct interpretive transposition, it is still useful to consider which ideas are raised in the image, in relation to the narrative. The photograph depicts a group of mainly African-American male performers (only one white performer is apparent) wearing identical costumes standing in varying levels of motion – some seem to be clapping, some snapping their fingers, laughing, all more or less facing one direction in what looks like a dance movement under a spotlight but not standing on any visible stage, in some sort of club environment. The audience looks predominantly (though not exclusively) white and sits statically watching the performers.

The costumes and the movement and music implicit in the photograph suggest a predetermined arrangement whereby the men put on a show. Moreover, the dress and gestures, as well as the mainly black dancers, hint that this performance displays a specifically black form of movement – suggestive of the Jes Grew the reader has just encountered. The men, although clearly moving, do not resemble a chorus line. Nor do they display any of the accepted dominant standards of classic white European dance tradition at the time, excepting perhaps the costumes. It is a much more casual, loosely organized congregation, suggestive not only of the very different cultural demands on the structure of performance but also of a diminished distance between these structures and everyday life.

Furthermore, the discernible members of the audience appear to be white. They are not clapping and no real movement or participation other than pure spectatorship is visible. And yet the presence of a white dancer raises numerous questions. Is he like Mayor Harry from the opening passage of the novel, who suddenly 'feels that uncomfortable sensation at the nape and soon he is doing something resembling the symptoms Jes Grew' (6)? Does his presence highlight the binary opposition between the races that has characterized racial thinking in America for so long – making clear the distinction as well as the interaction between them? Why does he stand at the front of the group? And, in fact, the viewer can only see his back, his hand, and one side of his face – perhaps he is not white at all? What does this ambiguity mean? Any direct answer to these questions is impossible as it would presume a direct translatability of

the picture into written language. Not only does Reed recognize the distinction, his novel suggests that meaning can be found precisely in that unbridgeable gap between the forms of expression. This realm of meaning is reminiscent of Ralph Ellison's famous suggestion that meaning (and by implication identity as well as visibility) is found not *on the beat* but in those rhythmic gaps within Louis Armstrong's music. Meaning is the syncopated narrative.

Fittingly, the fourth mode of narration in *Mumbo Jumbo* is introduced with a quotation attributed to Louis Armstrong:

> Once the band starts, everybody starts swaying from one side of the street to the other, especially those who drop in and follow the ones who have been to the funeral. These people are known as "the second line" and they may be anyone passing along the street who wants to hear the music. *The spirit hits them and they follow.* (7)

The novel repeatedly introduces non-fictional voices, brought in from outside the text (e.g. Armstrong, Warren Harding and James Weldon Johnson) that push the narrative forward. Similar to the visual interjections, these citations cannot be neatly integrated into a conventional textual analysis of *Mumbo Jumbo*. By bringing in Armstrong's words, for example, Reed introduces an entire set of connotations and associations related to the musician himself, relating the quotation to his own history. This momentarily takes the narrative outside of the text into the world of Louis Armstrong, but also, through the decontextualization of the passage, subtly revises Armstrong's public image. Although Reed does not give a source for his quotation, even a limited knowledge of Armstrong's biography or of African-American musical history is sufficient to understand the reference to the practice of marching bands in which Armstrong participated, often playing for funerals in African-American communities, and notably in New Orleans. What began as a ceremonial performance almost invariably transformed into an informal (though highly structured) musical expression or even competition between rival marching bands. The bands marched through the town streets attracting the second line, blurring the division between performers and onlookers. And yet, Armstrong is one of the central figures credited for inventing the jazz solo, introducing an entirely different set of associations to do with individuality and community into this moment in the novel. Reed blurs the lines between fiction and non-fiction through the very presence of this quoted passage in the context of the story of the anti-plague, subtly suggesting that Jes Grew was the 'spirit' that hit the people of New Orleans.

Furthermore, its physical positioning in the text suggests a particular link to the passage, or in this case, the photograph, that precedes it, with the Armstrong quotation inevitably serving as a caption to the image, at least on some level explaining it for the reader. Again, the meaning can be found in the relation of

the quotation to the rest of the narrative. It both stands on its own (within and outside of the text, as already discussed) and reflects on the surrounding text.

The fifth mode of narration introduced in the first chapter of the novel is a dry, informative narration that provides explanatory definitions, footnotes and even a partial bibliography in the end. Similar to the mode of visual imagery and to that of quoted non-fictional remarks, the effect of this mode is to blur the boundaries of the text by introducing preconceived ideas associated with a particular term and to create new meanings for the term in the space of the novel. Moreover, these external references display a self-conscious textuality, while simultaneously creating a tension between levels of fictionality and non-fictionality of the novel. The bibliography, the footnotes, the didactic passages and the other instances of this narrative mode suggest a much more academic and analytical text than one would normally expect in a novel, raising questions about what, then, is being analysed. Reed's text is an analytical interpretation of a particular reality, and is also a fictional account that is then open to the reader's analytical interpretation.

In this opening chapter, the implied author gives a definition for the title of the novel: *Mumbo Jumbo*, taken from the *American Heritage Dictionary*, which I will discuss in detail below, in the section on language. It is relevant to note here, however, that the very title itself can be said to include (at least) two sub-narrative modes. In 'On "The blackness of blackness": Ishmael Reed and a critique of the sign', published in his *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes that '[f]rom its title on, *Mumbo Jumbo* serves as a critique of black and Western literary forms and conventions, and of the complex relationships between the two' (221), and he goes on to describe how Reed's title parodies and signifies on the works of his literary ancestors – both black and white.[12] Indeed, as I will demonstrate shortly with reference to the novel's title, this fifth mode of narration repeatedly introduces the tension between the two different literary traditions, primarily in order to question the binarism that divides them.

As the novel moves from one narrative mode to another, the authoritative process of textual analysis is contrasted with the surreal world of Jes Grew and the Talking Android, for example, as well as with the religious or fantastic realm of Vodou and Hoodoo, spiritual possession, spells and curses. Again, the purpose of the modal narration is not to posit each mode in competition against the other. Rather, the motive is an inclusive one: by including all forms of reality and of textuality Reed stresses the impossibility of single meanings and invokes, instead, an acceptance of plurality with multiple interpretations co-existing simultaneously.

Language and textual time

This shift from mode to mode, which I have associated with systems of narration that alter the logic and the effect of a narrative whole, is not the only innovation

associated with modal jazz. The move away from strictly major/minor scales also entailed a new approach to the very structure of chords. No longer relying primarily on traditional thirds and predetermined chordal relationships, intervals traditionally perceived as producing dissonance took on a much more central role in the music. These fresh harmonic relationships created an alternative language with which to explore the thematic material. This system of linguistic innovation, alongside the structural innovation already discussed, might initially seem to subvert the idea of experience (inevitably a temporally retrospective model) as the basis of ethnic and cultural authority described above. This becomes a double-pronged approach then which both relies on a shared understanding of past experience and adamantly forges a new temporal and musical landscape. Miles Davis, much like Morrison and Reed, implicitly revisits the models of the past, reformulating the very role of the past in the present. In a dramatic divorce from the constricting forms of the past, these artists paradoxically and aggressively create a new space and medium for celebrating blackness, though for each the project is first and foremost an aesthetic one and only secondarily – and to varying degrees – a racial one.

Language of dissonance

In contrast to bebop, in modal jazz, thematic material was not generally developed through chord progression but via rhythm and melody, over a fairly stable harmony. Determined by the different approach to harmony, the musical language has new melodic and rhythmic freedom, differences which are immediately apparent in even a cursory comparison of bebop and early modal jazz. In their novels, both Reed and Morrison treat language with an approach as innovative and rhythmically attuned as that which is evident in the musical explorations in *Milestones* or *Kind of Blue*. Focusing on language and on the linguistic rhythms embedded into these novels reveals how both writers use language, and reveal the use of language as integral to processes of ethnic identification. Both Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* can be read as books about the very nature of language: creating linguistic textures and exploring their developments with the primary purpose of discovering or determining history.

   In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison highlights aspects of language as central thematic constructs that underpin the activity in the novel. Naming, for example, is of paramount importance. In a self-affirming move to reclaim the oral (and the aural) that was privileged in early African-American culture and suffered under the hegemonic impositions of white-European values, Morrison reverses this historical trajectory of language and moves her narrative from text to sound to song. The novel opens with a written note, signalling Mr Smith's suicidal flight and structurally linked with Milkman's birth. Of the notes, notices, letters and documents that appear in the first half of the novel, perhaps the most indicative

is that which formalizes the cruel oversight that names the Dead family (53). Dissatisfied and unstimulated, Milkman decides to journey South, purportedly to find hidden gold. The journey he has embarked on, however, will ultimately lead him *home* – a metaphor Morrison uses elsewhere to 'sign race while designing racelessness'. For her, 'the term [*home*] domesticates the racial project, moves the job of unmattering race away from pathetic yearning and futile desire; away from an impossible future or an irretrievable and probably nonexistent Eden to a manageable, doable, modern human activity' (1997a: 3–4). She goes on to claim that 'Language *is* community' and, indeed, by exploring the one, Milkman finds the other.

Having moved from text to storytelling (the story of the gold, for example, but also the 'word-of-mouth' which, as Marilyn Sanders Mobley describes in her dialogic reading of the novel, engages from the outset in a tense dialogue with textuality (1995: 50–1)), and after having alienated the local population of Shalimar, the place which he has been looking for, Milkman finds himself alone, in the middle of the wilderness in the middle of the night. And suddenly at this moment, language in its textual and dialogic forms becomes reduced to a primal world of sounds:

> Little by little it fell into place [. . .] The men and the dogs were talking to each other. In distinctive voices they were saying distinctive, complicated things. That long *yah* sound was followed by a specific kind of howl from one of the dogs [. . .] All those shrieks, those rapid tumbling barks, the long sustained yells, the tuba sounds, the drumbeat sounds, the low liquid *howm howm*, the reedy whistles, the thin *eeeee*'s of a cornet, the *unh unh unh* bass chords. It was all language [. . .] No, it was not language; it was what there was before language. Before things were written down. (277–8)

Tellingly configured in jazz terms, this epiphanic passage echoes the emphasis on sound in modal jazz which unravelled the binding confines of traditional harmonic communication and explored new modes of expression, modes which only ascribed to the systemic logic as a framework for new aural territory. By reducing communication to a primal realm of sound, Milkman is virtually reborn. This is not a romantic privileging of nature as an organic source of enlightenment, nor a simplistic celebration of vernacular culture as the exclusive purveyor of racial authenticity. Rather, manifesting the implications involved in the process of choice in ethnic identification, it is the climax of an Odyssean journey home whereby Milkman has struggled to find his own voice from the cacophony of predetermined social roles articulated in the novel.

As he himself observes, in his home-town he can never be anything but his father's son or even the grandson of his maternal grandfather, the eminent Dr Forster. He is sheltered and deferred to in the city because of that discriminating class structure advocated by his grandfather and taken to an extreme by his father. Even Guitar, his one true friend throughout, begins to despise and

doubt him because he is his father's son. In Danville where his father and Pilate, his father's sister, were born, the adoration he felt from the people stemmed from their adulation of his father and of his grandfather. It is only in the middle of the darkness in the woods that Milkman first begins to gain a real sense of self. He is surrounded by complete darkness but (literally and figuratively) sees it, or into it, for the first time and it is this heightened perception that precipitates the understanding of language. Not unlike learning language in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, what Milkman realizes is *intelligibility*. In her analysis of postclassical music, Rose Subotnik expounds on the centrality of intelligibility for the social value and success of art. (In classical music, she suggests, it is tonality that functions autonomously to engender musical intelligibility.) Her notion of intelligibility is not simply meaning imposed on or communicated by music; rather, a work's meaningful autonomy depends on a universal intelligibility which is intrinsic to that work. And yet by definition this process is dialectical as 'all structures are dependent for meaning on subjective minds existing *outside* of those structures' (My emphasis. 197). Thus meaning can only be universal through the subject and the subject can only be realized through meaningful (objective) autonomy. For Milkman, the transformation takes place through meaningful realization of his own temporal and physical location. This realization, however, is both within time and space, and outside them. It occurs after he has lost his way and has lost sight and sound of his surroundings.

Importantly, here, repeating a pattern linking birth and death that recurs in the novel, Guitar tries to kill him. After Guitar runs away Milkman is left a new man. Where before, he stumbled through the branches with no sense of time or space, he now correctly estimates the location of the other hunters and reaches them easily. His relationship with the other men and with his surroundings has changed completely: his first response to the social and physical setting was hostile, aggressive, needy and hungry. Following this climactic revelation, however, he exhibits a new sense of modesty and sincerity; he has found a language through which he can realize himself.

> [H]e found himself exhilarated by simply walking the earth. Walking it like he belonged on it; like his legs were stalks, tree trunks, a part of his body that extended down down down into the rock and soil, and were comfortable there – on the earth and on the place where he walked. And he did not limp. (281)

By immersing himself in his history – his personal history, constantly reflecting on past moments of his own life; his family's history, visiting the home of his people; and his racial history, journeying to the South for the first time – Milkman discovers a sound world that links the urban (social) experience into which he was born with the rural (individual) experience into which he is reborn that together provide an authority of experience with which he can

begin to communicate with those around him. Indeed, it is only after this epi-sode that he starts to form productive relationships with other people. And, in a significant return to music, it is only at this point that he finally begins making sense of the song of Solomon whose refrain echoes throughout the novel.

This idea of language taking on new meaning in the space of the novel, a meaning which reconciles the histories of meaning as well as the shifting proc-ess of interpretation at the moment of the novel (that is, both the moment within the novel and the actual temporal circumstance in which the novel is being read), is powerfully demonstrated in Reed's title: *Mumbo Jumbo*. The most immediate connotation of the title suggests a nonsensical expression, a word, phrase or language that signifies nothing. This reference not only evokes the patronizing denigration of early African-American linguistic constructs by white Americans, but also suggests the monumental alienation from language experi-enced by the African slaves when they were first brought to America. Moreover, the phrase is relevant to historically repeated criticisms of jazz in general and scat singing in particular – rejected as being a nonsensical approach to noise rather than a system of musical expression.

The definition of *mumbo-jumbo* is complicated by Reed's introduction of an explicit definition in his opening chapter: 'Mandingo *mā-mā-gyo-mbō*, "magician who makes the troubled spirits of ancestors go away": *mā-mā*, grandmother+*gyo*, trouble+*mbō*, to leave' (7). Despite his obvious awareness of the more common use of the term, by giving this definition, Reed effectively directs his readers to take the latter denotation as the guiding interpretation of the novel's title, even of the novel itself. The deliberate tension between these definitions illuminates the importance of taking nothing for granted, perpetually questioning the very meaning of words and of language. Reed thus redresses the imbalance between the different modes of meaning, recognizing the potential relevance of each for his novel. Indeed, language, interpretation, noise (linguistic, musical and other kinds of noise), as well as magic, spirits, ancestry and history, are all key themes in *Mumbo Jumbo*.[13] Refusing to accept the traditional mutual-exclusivity of realms of meaning, Reed's narrative moves forward by the new vertical and horizontal tensions of his narrative elements. In other words, through the use of traditionally dissonant lexes, *Mumbo Jumbo* parallels the productive tension between the underlying chords and the modal improvisations of the modal jazz musicians (vertical tension) while himself pursuing the melodic (horizontal) implications of new modes of expression.[14]

As in *Song of Solomon*, then, through the reformulation of dissonance, the dis-tinction between language and history is no longer self-evident, as the structures of each fragments into a plethora of meanings, readings and stories. This device calls attention to the processes of narration and of reading, two processes that become paramount in the active development of African-American ethno-cultural identities, in the 1960s and 1970s. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. refers to this technique of aesthetically and ideologically manipulating the added layers of

meaning in language as a 'system of signification,' in his essay, 'On "The black-ness of blackness"'. I have already defined Gates's use of the term Signifyin(g) in an earlier chapter. Gates suggests that Reed adds a dimension to signifying through the doubling of double signs, establishing a veritable polyphony of sig-nification. Describing the illustrated front cover of the first edition of *Mumbo Jumbo* (which, Gates explains, Reed designed together with Allen Weinbert), Gates interprets the image as the first manifestation of this system of doubled doubles.[15] He writes that '[n]ot only are two distinct and conflicting metaphysi-cal systems here represented and invoked, but Reed's cover also serves as an overture to the critiques of dualism and binary opposition which gives a major thrust to the text of *Mumbo Jumbo*' (1988: 221–2). Reed invokes this multiplicity of references and, indeed, challenges the very idea of referentiality in ways additional to this doubling of doubles, in the symbology of the novel.

I have already described the modal narrative structure of *Mumbo Jumbo*. The collection of different modes of storytelling creates a polyphonous effect wherein the seams and disparities remain evident. Meaning is effected in the moment of composition: that is, both Reed's act of writing and the reader's moment of reading. Reed uses a diverse collection of impressions, events, styles, as the text's various strands, and thus provides a framework that systematically subverts the reader's expectations. The construction deliberately approximates but does not in fact realize the standard form of a novel. Reed sets up elements that function in the traditional literary form only to knock them down: third-person narrator, characters and characterization, plot and a sense of realism that pushes the narrative forward; these are all introduced and immediately subverted. The role and nature of the narrator, the characters and how the reader becomes acquainted with them, the process of unfolding the plot and the context of a graspable realism – these are all challenged, creating a critical response to these literary traditions and a satire of them. In his analysis, Gates effectively argues that Reed's technique in *Mumbo Jumbo* moves the satire beyond simply a critique of literary traditions, actually parodying the notion of racial essentialism.

> *Mumbo Jumbo* is a novel about indeterminacy in interpretation itself. The text repeats this theme again and again; its two narrative voices, moreover, the Atonist Path and its Wallflower Order, are criticized severely for a foolish emphasis on unity, on the number 1, on what the novel calls "point". (1988: 234)

Gates goes on to contrast this 'foolish emphasis on [. . .] the number 1' by the Wallflower Order – a focus on unity also undertaken by the *Mu'tafikah*, which is an ethnic essentialist cultural activist group led by Berbelang, who loot museums and ship stolen art-works back to Africa – with the figure of Pa Pa La Bas and his project to find the text of Jes Grew. In contrast to *Song of Solomon*

which begins with text and moves to music, here, the narrative trajectory is defined by a search for text. This text, however, like the sound and the song in Morrison's novel, is a primal and originary mode of expression. This project of seeking a text reconfigures notions of race: the search for a text is a search for meaning through language, and thence for a way to think about and creatively explore ethnic identities. However, it also implies a pre-existing text: the text of history that must be recognized (both identified and re-cognized, that is, conceived of in a new way).

Relating to the political movements of the late 1960s, this reinvestigation is linked to Black Power: creating a new language, an autonomous system of signifiers. Reed's satire simultaneously comments on an inherited linguistic structural construct and creates a new system of symbols and set of linguistic allusions. Through this combination of retrospective investigation and autonomous creative forces, Reed asserts the authority of African-American experience as a valid and self-sufficient ethno-cultural framework. Moreover, using modal polyphony in the text's structure, content, in its visual and musical fabric, Reed begins to subvert the binarism that governs most of the relations between African- and white-Americans in the history of America and invokes what Gates has called 'an indeterminacy', a plurality of interactive relations. This notion of plurality will be central to my discussion of free jazz in the following chapter.

Dissonant mythologies

Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, along with numerous other African-American works of fiction from the 1960s and 1970s, were unambiguously involved in a project of ethnic re-definition. After having cast aside the identities prescribed by racist stereotypes, having begun to explore the possibilities of choice and performativity within notions of ethnicity, as discussed in the previous chapter, African-American communities sought to voice an unambiguously autonomous cultural and political presence. This presence needed to detach itself from the confines of racism and yet could not afford (nor, arguably, could it have achieved) a communal detachment from this history. One way this paradox was sought to be resolved was by attempting to reconcile the various inherited mythologies with one another, and with lived experience. Defining these mythologies as systems of belief that characterize political and cultural structures aligns this aesthetic project with the parallel development of modal jazz.

Morrison's *Song of Solomon* is a delicate but powerful weaving together of the many different stories and histories that inform Milkman's notions of self. The entire novel is a composite of stories and of storytellers which gradually grow in scope and in importance. They appear at first as mere anecdotes, as when Pilate first meets Milkman and tells him about her father, his grandfather. The stories become charged with emotion and purpose when, for example, Macon Dead

first tells his son about why he despises Ruth, Milkman's mother, in a scene which follows the violent confrontation between the two (70–4). As Milkman and the reader hear more and more stories, the power and purpose of these grow. Guitar's story about his father's death and the miserable compensation given his mother by the mill boss becomes more than just Guitar's childhood; it becomes a history of the race. As Milkman travels south, his narrative (both the one we read in the novel and the one he constructs for himself) grows from the history of his family to the history of race and of slavery, being finally transformed into a mythology – the myth of his great-grandfather Solomon who could fly is no longer the immediately personal story of Milkman Dead's ancestor. The process of mythologization removes the tale from tangible limitations of experience and accepted history and transforms it into a web of symbols and signs, figures and fathers, that is adopted by an entire community. Indeed, most of the residents of Shalimar ('pronounced *Shalimone*' or, in fact, Solomon) claim kinship with the mythical Solomon.

The nature of storytelling, of experience and of mythology is further complicated when the myth of Solomon is described. Solomon had twenty-one children before he 'done fly away' leaving his wife Ryna inconsolable. He tried taking his youngest son Jake (Milkman's grandfather) with him but the baby slipped from his hands to the ground where he was found and cared for by Heddy, a Native American. As most clearly manifest in the figure of Milkman himself, this story is not unique but repeats itself endlessly in the novel: flight (Mr Smith, Milkman, Guitar), absent fathers (Macon Dead Sr. who is shot when his children are young; Pilate's all-female household; Guitar's father; Ruth's father – who lived until her adulthood but whose absence was paralysing for her; and, arguably even Milkman's father who – although he was present – could barely communicate with his son in any real sense), orphaned babies, and self-destructive paralysing love. This sense of repetition then belies the specificity of Milkman's experience. This tension between the specific and the general suggests an antiphonal relationship where the individual and the universal experiences are linked through the call and response of storytelling: Milkman's narrative, his call, is answered by the harmony of voices adding new layers to the narrative melody.

This universalizing aspect of Morrison's narrative is extended beyond the realm of African-American ethnic cultures, through the abundantly interjected elements of white America's cultural history and mythologies. One set of explicit references to this white cultural tradition comes from European fairytales with casual allusions to 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', 'Hansel & Gretel' and the story of 'Rumpelstiltskin'. In all three occasions the reference is fleeting and presumes a familiarity with the story in a way not presumed in the story of the flying Solomon – pointing to a crucial distinction between an old story retold and a new one being re-created. A second, and perhaps more important, system of allusions is in the repeated references to the Bible that course through

the text. Two of the more obvious instances of this are in the names of many of the central characters (Pilate, Reba, Hagar, Ruth, First Corinthians, Magdalene, etc) and in the novel's title: *Song of Solomon.*

Directly invoking the Old Testament book of the same name, also called the 'Song of Songs' the title of the novel is doubly relevant. Redolent of that signifying process, the doubling of doubles, already described, 'Song of Solomon' both affirms dominant socio-cultural tenets and celebrates a subversive notion of blackness. The biblical text contains some of the most erotic and passionate poetry in the Bible, describing the love of a man for his beloved, and often taken as a metaphor for God's love of man, or Christ's love for the church. Engaging in a discourse of love (politics of love, boundaries and taboos of love, and the political and personal liberatory possibilities of love), the novel can be seen as a reconfiguration of the biblical text: each of the storytellers in Morrison's novel demonstrates different aspects of love and different ways of loving. Hagar was '[t]otally taken over by her anaconda love, she had no self left, no fears, no wants, no intelligence that was her own' (137). As Guitar observed she was a '[p]retty little black-skinned woman. Who wanted to kill for love, die for love' (306). Ruth held a reverent and quasi-erotic love for her father. Reba let any man love her just so she could feel loved. Pilate and Ruth are both ready to kill to protect their loved ones. Macon Dead 'acquired things and used people to acquire more things [. . .] pay[ing] homage to his own father's life and death by loving what that father had loved [. . .] He loved these things to excess because he loved his father to excess' (300). And finally there is Guitar Bains, whose love is political; he is willing to kill and to die for love: 'It's about loving us [African Americans]. About loving you. My whole life is love' (159). (We have moved from Baldwin's bebop query of relational harmony: "*Do you love me?*" to the assertion here of modalities of love.) The biblical text becomes a crucial model for Morrison's novel and for the rewriting of African-American cultural identity as the all but explicit sub-text of the title and of the manifestations of love in the novel resonate with the more famous lines from 'Song of Solomon': 'I am black, but comely' (1: 5). As Milkman strives to realize himself, in his journey through language to sound, he finally learns the *song of songs*: a celebration of blackness and the assertion of beauty that he was not able to recognize before.

Morrison thus represents the unique appropriation of the Christian tradition and its reinscription into African-American sensibilities, as she reassembles the mythologies that inform African-American experience. By mingling the universal and the particular, the familiar and the re-invented, the *then* and the *now*, Morrison subverts the accepted notions of a linear history. She writes a new 'Song of Solomon' that incorporates the traumatic history of America, both white and black cultural signifiers, and thus re-creates a mythology that is at once ancient and recognizable, as well as immediate and fresh. Thus, rather than suggesting any inherent biological or behavioural community, it is by

juxtaposing traditionally dissonant modes of thought that Morrison successfully invokes a shared language of experience as inducing a cohesive community.

Improvising detection

With the move away from prescriptive formal harmonic patterns, musicians no longer needed to remain fixed to traditional rhythmic or structural frameworks. In his extended discussion of the modality of John Coltrane's *India*, Ekkehard Jost writes: 'These patterns [of rhythmic disorientation] are of note because they are not used in a schematic way; they vary throughout the piece, therefore constantly giving new impulses to the rhythmic flow, and admittedly contributing to the listener's insecurity' (30–1). Indeed, in much of the critical writing about avant-garde jazz (more so for later than earlier modal pieces), there is a repeated reference to the listener's discomfort, disorientation or alienation.

As elaborated above, the danger of the emergent complexities of elemental sub-systems is the dissolution of a whole; the expression spirals inwards, leaving the classical listener/reader with musical or textual noise – or stasis. The resolution to this danger is twofold. First, modern music demands a concomitant modern audience, one capable of both extracting meaning and realizing structures of the narrative; thus will the spiralling collapse of the structure into self-destructive serial systems be averted. If earlier forms demanded of audiences an enclosed balancing response to a coherent musical text (that is, as discussed, that classical recognition of meaning that comes out of balanced subject-object tension), modern music demands instead the opening up of questions. The listeners, and by implication, the readers, must decipher the aesthetic and social expressions being articulated by investing their own subject positions into the very moment of articulation. What happens, then, is a recurring immediacy in the art work as it literally makes sense both in the act of creation and in its moment of expression. This multiplicity of 'now's is not quite accounted for in the reconciled multiple selves, as in the tonal irony/bebop paradigm, rather, it is that compound subjectivity who is realized through the very activity demanded by each simultaneous moment:

> The subject, here, can no longer be identified with the individual as a unitary structure or even the individual as a multiplicity of selves. Rather, the focus is upon the activity of the subject together with the subject's local understandings and accountings [. . .] Each event-element can be referred to the functional ordering which is brought about by its activities and in and through which it makes sense. (Witkin, 1998: 106)

This process that combines audience activity, determining questions, and critical and temporal immediacy in order to detect meaning as a mechanism of

social truth-value takes form in the novels as detective fiction. Both *Mumbo Jumbo* and *Song of Solomon* not only contain within them a mystery that must be solved, but depend fundamentally on the ability of the protagonists (and of the reader) to ask the right questions. Both Pa Pa La Bas and Milkman Dead, respectively, present a central protagonist who functions as the detective who gathers clues until the dramatic solution is discovered. Unlike a traditional detective novel, however, the respective solutions are not in themselves suffi-cient to bring the plot to a close. Much like early responses to avant-garde jazz, and even more so to John Coltrane's later modality, the success of the narrative depends on the reader undertaking a parallel journey of detection, learning the rules of the novel, deciphering the language, the imagery and symbology, the temporal realm of the text and thus to identify and realize the reach of its plot and structure outside of its own boundaries.

In Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, the reader-detective must make her way through layers of historical fact and fiction that are interwoven into the central narrative and must identify for herself how they function within the main mystery.[16] A covert war in Haiti, the politics of the 1920s in US government, gangs and social strata, the histories of the Templar Knights and the Teutonic Knights, Black American Islam, Freemasons and – crucially – the images and discourse of Hoodoo, as well as the intricacies of American race history are all riffs which Reed meticulously improvises on leaving the reader to shake-rattle-and-roll along, following or losing her bearing. At the close of the novel, Pa Pa La Bas is satisfied that the mystery has been solved and yet this is not an end for what we have discovered is the mystery itself. The text of Jes Grew has been destroyed, the pervasiveness of the anti-plague in its manifest vibrance of African-American cultural output is testimony to its persistent power and the dilemma is, as Reed tells us, not what to do with the body:

> Everyone should be sheltered, fed, there was no disagreement about the body. It was what to do about the head. [. . .] The sad old creature [. . .] wanted them to have *his* head. An Atonist head. While La Bas wanted them to have the heads their people had left for them or create new ones of their own. (216–7)

Readily lending itself to a musical reading this passage exposes the tension between a rigid *A-tonist* predetermined melodic scheme and an open one where the *head* – the main melody or theme – combines inherited structures with newly created ones. Reed's avant-garde playing with modes of reality, incorpo-rating a Vodou mystique into an annotated history of America formed along jazz structures, suggests that the only way to document, narrate or even prop-erly conceive of the troubling history of racism is by challenging the very notions of representation or reality. Much as Jes Grew cannot be finally reconciled with

its text, so must the reader learn that the search for meaning must necessarily interrupt the harmonic balance of tonal centres, and cut across narrative melodies for any productive articulation of history.

In Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, the plot too moves outside successive spiralling narrative strands towards a collective end point by means of a shift from a strictly naturalist formalism. Not unlike *Mumbo Jumbo,* all of the elements of the hard-boiled detective novel are here: murder, lust, betrayal, vengeance, greed, man-eating women and subservient (good) women, all pulled together by the introspective protagonist who must gather clues to realize himself and, through physical engagement with the forces around him, learns to locate himself and restore order to the world. But, as with Reed, these structures are premised on a world whose very bases of reality are redefined. The mystery becomes not a quest for order or guilty party but for meaning, for language and for narrative.

The story following the growth of Milkman Dead is interwoven with numerous side-stories, sub-plots and rich motifs, so many of which pivot around the theme of flight. As the novel progresses the reader, like Milkman himself, gathers clues and stumbles to and from dead-ends as the theme is fleshed out, realizing Milkman's own destiny. Throughout this process the reader-protagonist-detective must determine how to reconcile the beautiful literary device, an evocative flight of fancy, with its critical function for the reconstruction of a personal as well as an historical narrative of race. The novel ends with Milkman finally taking the flight he has been aspiring to since his early childhood and since the beginning of the novel: 'Without wiping away the tears, taking a deep breath, or even bending his knees – he leaped. As fleet and bright as a lodestar he wheeled [. . .] for he knew what Shalimar knew: If you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it' (337). Morrison's text teaches that these are not mutually exclusive possibilities, i.e. either this is a fairytale or it is flowery language to depict something much more concrete. If it is the former then, presumably, the tale is not *real* and can be taken lightly. If the latter reading is adopted then the absolutely crucial political and social implications of *flight*, relative to African-American histories becomes cheapened and deflated. The attempted flight of Mr Smith, for example, ceases being a redemptive, beautiful image for his utter despair and suicide and becomes, instead, simply an unlucky and unfortunate physical failure at soaring above the reality of his life.

The journey which Milkman and the reader both traverse is importantly redolent of the Adornian depiction of the 'dialectic of musical material' described earlier: by inscribing us into the systemic realm of modal structures, the narrative gains 'a liberation which grants it unlimited domination over natural material' (1958: 9). Thus, by blurring the boundaries of naturalist plausibility, Reed and Morrison defy a single interpretive activity, demanding a new way of reading, and embarking on a deliberately difficult process of story-making which rejects what Gates has called 'the foolish emphasis on unity'. These texts challenge the racist logic of inherited modes of thinking and offer a new pattern through

which ethnic identity may be experienced. It is, ultimately, as Adorno put it, the *necessity of continuity* which successfully realizes these modal works as meaningful wholes. *The Bluest Eye, Song of Solomon* and *Mumbo Jumbo* each raises questions of language, rhythm, reality, character and cohesion. In each, however, the driving momentum of communication and intelligibility inevitably returns the texts into a present tense: a dynamic and socialized subjectivity whereby the mystery, the very subject of blackness, its narrative and its construction, realizes both presence and meaning.

Chapter 4

Free jazz: postracialism and collectivity in Toni Morrison's 'Recitatif' and *Paradise*

Whenever they believe to understand, they perceive really only a dead mould which they guard tenaciously as their unquestionable possession and which is lost precisely in that moment that it becomes a possession.

Philosophy of Modern Music, Theodor W. Adorno

The appearance in the late 1960s and 1970s of a tumultuous racial consciousness which celebrated blackness as a powerful political and poetic force, redefined the process of ethnic identification, both on a communal and an individual level. The political necessity for a totalizing notion of blackness that paradoxically ran parallel to an increasing emphasis on choice in the ethnic identity-making process (a choice informed by cultural contexts or shared experience) gave way to a more balanced proliferation of conceptions of blackness. Moreover, the role of biology in theories of racial and ethnic constructions was increasingly questioned, as the understanding of the role of the nation and national boundaries in racializing structures was dramatically reconfigured.[1]

The work of Paul Gilroy is particularly useful in demonstrating the changing role of national boundaries in the racial discourse. Gilroy is a British intellectual whose *Between Camps* (2000), draws together and attempts to respond to some of the more urgent questions of racial and ethnic identity that rise from late twentieth century biogenetic discoveries. He identifies the hold which histories of suffering and chiefly the legacy of the Nazi regime still have on conceptions of race, primarily in their relation to nationhood and territorial power struggles, and offers a 'translocal' model of community, what he calls a 'planetary humanism'. Gilroy defines what he calls the crises of raciology which require a dramatic linguistic and ethical, as well as a political reconceptualization of race. Gilroy argues for a postracial humanism, one which he admits is utopian but insists on as a vital model for collective practice.

In *Between Camps*, Gilroy addresses numerous aspects of raciology, demonstrating how many of them have lost any potency as part of a productive process of identification. Considering, for example, implications of biotechnology and molecular science, Gilroy pointedly asks, 'What does that long-lived trope "race"

mean in the age of molecular biology? [. . .] Skin, bone, and even blood are no longer the primary referents of racial discourse' (48). The very backbone on which the history of racism (and that of racial self-identification) has relied can no longer serve the purposes of race, in its old form. Moreover, he expresses concern at the 'the growing absence of ethical considerations from what used to be termed "antiracist" thinking and action. Revitalizing ethical sensibilities in this area requires moving away from antiracism's tarnished vocabulary while retaining many of the hopes to which it was tied' (6). Alongside his description of this need to redefine race, Gilroy points to a simultaneous anxiety about losing this identity, and a tendency to fixate on the static symbology of a culture as a way of clinging to the tradition.

> Particularity can be maintained and communal interests protected if they are fixed in their most authentic and glorious postures of resistance. This understandable but inadequate response to the prospect of losing one's identity reduces cultural traditions to the simple process of invariant repetition. (13)[2]

The endless repetition objectifies the process, transforming it into a material commodity which, in turn, kindles new anxieties about the loss of ethnocultural identity. 'The emphasis on culture as a form of property to be owned rather than lived characterizes the anxieties of the moment' (24). It is against precisely this pointless momentum towards hypostatizing duplication, and in recognition of the increasingly obvious gap separating the culture (and capital) of racial discourse and any purposeful or productive conception or manifestation of race, that free jazz reacts.

The emergence of what can begin to be identified as free jazz, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, pushes the revolutionary ideas explored in modal jazz, as described in the previous chapter, to an alternate extreme. Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*, recorded late Dec. 1960, and John Coltrane's 1965 *Ascension*, though different from one another in various ways and separated by a space of almost five years, nevertheless stand unequivocally as the two pillars of early free jazz.[3] Challenging or casting aside virtually all of the pre-conceived rules in jazz, these two recordings initially present startling and rather unsettling aural experiences. Both albums focus their creative impulses on collective improvisation, although this is done differently and with different effect in each. Coleman was not the first musician to introduce collective improvisation into jazz: it was a feature of early New Orleans jazz and dixieland (though used differently), and decades later, in the late 1950s, Charles Mingus had already experimented briefly with this kind of spontaneous group interaction in his music workshops. Coleman's feat in 1960, however, was the emotional and musical cohesiveness of the improvisation, sustained for a full thirty-eight minutes in *Free Jazz*. What sounds initially like a cacophonous chaos of instruments with only a vague sense

of rhythmic stability, becomes – with repeated and concentrated hearings – something entirely new, taking on its own logic and marking exciting new territory in the frontiers of jazz. Coleman's record features two piano-less quartets with each musician (barring the two drummers who solo together) taking up the theme from the collective, in turn, and making it new.[4] Ornette Coleman explains:

> I don't tell the members of my group what to do. I want them to play what they hear in the piece for themselves. I let everyone express himself just as he wants to. The musicians have complete freedom, and so, of course, our final results depend entirely on the musicianship, emotional make-up, and taste of the individual member. (1959b)

Elsewhere, discussing his guiding principle of Harmolodics, Coleman responds to his interviewer's query as to the amount of verbal direction he gives:

> When you ask a question or make a statement it's either that you know the subject that you're talking about or you're trying to express something without the persons you're talking to changing their views of it. You try to make their view of it more clear to them so they can stay more natural, rather than to think that you're just trying to get them to repeat something to make *you* feel more secure or something. (Mandel, 2008: 128)

Coltrane's *Ascension* treats the idea of group improvisation somewhat differently. Here, each musician was given a written theme, a melodic nucleus, as well as a presumably pre-arranged structural modality, that directs both his solos and the collective improvisations.[5] The piece flows from a collective ensemble to the soloing instrumentalist and back to the ensemble, where the emphasis lies on the process of music making. Indeed, one of the principle differences between the collective improvisation heard in either of the two recordings lies in how the solos relate to the entirety of the sound. Jost explains:

> [In the] collective improvisations of *Free Jazz*, the contributions of each and every improviser have a certain melodic life of their own; motivic connections and dove-tailing of the various parts create a polyphonic web of interactions. In *Ascension*, on the other hand, the parts contribute above all to the formation of changing sound-structures, in which the individual usually has only a secondary importance. Quite plainly, the central idea is not to produce a network of interwoven independent melodic lines, but dense sound complexes. (1974: 89)

The two different recordings demonstrate the varieties of motivating logic that guide the resulting musical explorations. The success of both of these

approaches and others that followed, fundamentally depends on the collaborative and perpetually engaged efforts of the musicians.

In an interview with Alyn Shipton, May 9, 2000, musician and jazz scholar, the music critic Gary Giddins compared Coltrane's achievement in *Ascension* to the radical effect of 'black on black canvas or a white on white canvas':

> [A]fter you paint a canvas that's completely white and hang it up in a museum, you've gone as far as you can go . . . what are you going to put on it? That's what happened with the *avant-garde*: Coltrane got to the white canvas with *Ascension*, and after that [. . .] you had guys [. . .] who came out of free jazz but were playing a whole different way – they were using melody, they were using rhythm-and-blues rhythms, using whatever they wanted. Coltrane had given us a new canvas and we could begin on that again. (Shipton, 2001: 804)

This idea that Coltrane (and implicitly other free-jazz innovators) effectively created a new beginning is reminiscent of the premise of LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka)'s 'The jazz avant-garde' (1961), about the relationship of bebop and avant-garde jazz to preceding musical forms. Jones writes that 'Blues and bebop are *musics*. They are understandable, emotionally, as they sit: without the barest discussion of their origins. And the reason I think for this is that they *are* origins, themselves. Blues is a beginning. Bebop, a beginning' (72). Jones goes on to compare the jazz avant-garde to these beginnings, describing how it uses these origins as hypotheses with which to produce new musical realms. The relation of this music to its traditional heritage is something I will discuss at length below.

In light of the countless and vastly different manifestations of free jazz, the unifying principle is easier to identify by what it is *not* rather than by what it is: one of the key defining features of free jazz is its persistent rejection of predetermined musical categories. This negative definition becomes particularly relevant for Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, as will be demonstrated presently. Free jazz can also be identified by its relentless disruption of the traditional hierarchy of instruments and its general aim for a reconfigured equilibrium between musical components.

Adorno's *Musique Informelle*

In his article, 'Vers une *Musique Informelle*' (1961b), published in *Quasi una Fantasia*, Theodor Adorno offers an analytic observation of the developments of modern music. His discussion of what he calls *musique informelle* suggests the emergence of a new kind of music as the imminent outcome of a process of musical innovation, where each musical period relates and reacts to traditional and prevalent ideas of form that preceded it. Translated, the title of the article means *Towards* or *Approaching an Informal Music*; by 'informal music' Adorno

signifies a music that rejects form, and he occasionally even refers to this as *free music.*

In this article (and in his work in general) Adorno identifies a trajectory of development in Classical music whereby each stage relates in a particular way to structural categories inherited from earlier styles. Moving from the classical individuation of the Beethoven-sonata form, to the tonal irony of Mahler and Berg, through the individuated agency of Schoenberg's systemic serialism, Adorno identifies the culmination of these forces as *musique informelle* in which the musical expression, in its attempts to become absolutely free, finally rejects *all* the structural categories of its ancestry. Paradoxically, however, according to Adorno this moment in the musical trajectory is a utopian impossibility. He discusses some of the dangers and some of the implications of this new kind of music that sound uncannily appropriate for jazz. Without going so far as to claim that free jazz is a manifestation of Adorno's utopian *musique informelle,* by describing some aspects of Adorno's vision and their articulation in or relevance for free jazz, I do hope to demonstrate how the former can be used as a model for understanding the musical and social implications of the latter. This can be seen primarily along four key ideas: utopia, self-reflexivity, language and sociability.

Utopia

Adorno suggests an ongoing antimony in *musique informelle*: music that rejects all structural limitations finds itself either incomprehensible (and thus, effectively, limited) or reiterative, whereby these rejected formal impositions inevitably arise in new manifestations. In other words, the initial danger of a music striving to be absolutely autonomous of historicity lies in its necessarily concomitant rejection of any communicative capacity; a prime evil in Adorno's scheme where for music to be authentic (which is, as we've seen, of highest import for him) it must contain truth-value. And for music to contain truth-value it must be communicative on some level: musical, aesthetic, cultural, social or political, it must relate fundamentally to human experience. So, free music becomes either incommunicable and thus effectively irrelevant, or, in its attempts to avoid precisely that incommunicability while still avoiding the limitations which it cast aside, the music will – Adorno claims – inadvertently but inevitably give rise to precisely the same musical categories which it sought to reject, from within.

> [I]n aesthetics the universal and the particular do not constitute mutually exclusive opposites [. . .] If informal music dispenses with [these crystallized musical co-ordinates] – in other words, with the musically bad universal forms of internal compositional categories – then these universal forms will surface

again in the innermost recesses of the particular event and set them alight (1961b: 273).

Adorno effectively suggests, then, that absolutely free music is, by definition, an unattainable ideal. Any semblance of absolute freedom will crumble immediately under the natural tendency to seek comfortable limitations rather than freedom; order rather than chaos. Moreover, even if a music were able to be somehow absolutely free, in the audience's very efforts to listen to it, the immediate impulse to understand it would superimpose a linguistic or conceptual framework onto the music. The necessary participation of the listener in the impossible realization of the utopian ideal is a point I will return to at greater length below.

Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* (1960) (incidentally recorded within a year of Adorno's article being written) manifests a parallel tendency to that described by Adorno. *Free Jazz* opens with an exciting explosion of notes which is followed by what Coleman describes as a moment of 'harmonic unison'. The effect is quite startling and sparked no little criticism when it burst onto the jazz world, regarded as anti-jazz by some and as cacophonous aural offence by others. But as we begin to re-investigate *Free Jazz*, the references to traditional conventions are gradually revealed: although it begins with this polyphonic musical moment, it then moves from one soloist to the next, following quite a conventional jazz structure. So here, as in *musique informelle*, the music strives to cast aside the structural limitations and yet seemingly in spite of itself the very same categories emerge from within.[6]

Self-reflexivity

Adorno writes that this music defines itself not only in terms of how it differs from preceding restricting forms, but also through reference to its own 'musical substance, and not in terms of external laws' (1961b: 272). In other words, *musique informelle* seeks its structural and emotional logic from within, rather than through references to previous works, periods or structures. The parallels with free jazz are evident. Having redefined the roles of most – if not all – of the central elements of jazz, the music is barely comprehensible with immediate reference to other kinds of jazz. However, through a concentrated listening process, the inner logic and the emotional truth of the musical content become apparent (once repeated, of course, the music acquires a new dimension of historicity, arguably cancelling out its autonomy). Thus, its radical dependence on the here-and-now, the dynamic process of the musical moment which works through spontaneous and collective improvisation, suggests a practice parallel to the one envisioned by Adorno. Indeed, Adorno cautions that 'this gives rise to the difficulty that in the absence of such residual forms, musical coherence

appears to be quite inconceivable' (1961b: 273) – a criticism flung frequently by what Jones called the 'anti-jazz people' at the proponents and performers of free jazz.[7]

The instrument of language

Adorno put this another way when he suggested that '[o]ne might say that music operates *within* that language [of composition], rather than *with* it' (1961b: 281). This statement reformulates the introspective process of self-definition and reconceptualizes the relationship between musical language and the act of composition. To do this he relates an anecdote about Schoenberg who – when told that the serial twelve-tone technique had become a universal triumph – reportedly asked: '"Indeed, and do they actually compose with it?"' (284). It is precisely this *with it* that Adorno emphasizes and seeks to redress. Adorno writes that the 'with it' of Schoenberg's question contains a 'residue of unresolved externality. Composition is understood in a traditional sense; the composer composes with raw material which he works on thematically [. . .] Material and composition remain alien, opposed to each other' (285). Schoenberg's statement suggests an irreducible gap where the musical material becomes the tools with which the act of composition functions.

Adorno foresees a different process in *musique informelle* which dissolves the distance between the material and the composition. Rather than presuming the prior existence of one of the components of music, the two begin to coexist simultaneously: the musical language and the act of composition that creates new meaning become inextricably linked and function together. The gap between the two remains irreducible, and yet it is precisely the tension between them that is manipulated in the act of creativity. In many ways the spontaneity of jazz improvisational techniques fulfils this characteristic of Adorno's ideal *musique informelle*. Free jazz, in particular, with its self-referentiality, together with the much more radical dependence on spontaneous and group improvisation, offers a model where the musical material cannot be said to be the pre-existing raw substance of composition. The freedom of free jazz lies precisely in the elimination of these preconceived definitions. Moreover, the process of composition is, by and large, a spontaneous reaction to the material being explored at that moment by the various musicians.

Socializing music

In 'Vers une *Musique Informelle*', Adorno stresses the importance of focusing on the interactions between the elements of music as a central component defining any musical moment.

> Music is not composed simply of elements purified of larger structures. This idea, still widely prevalent among young composers, that the basic givens of

a single note could determine the totality of a piece of music [. . .] Such an idea forgets something which is itself incapable of further reduction, namely relationships. This is the fact that music consists not just of notes, but of the relations between them and that the one cannot exist without the other. (1961b: 298–9)

According to Adorno, attention to this aspect of music leads necessarily to *musique informelle*. This, then, is a music which becomes centrally concerned with the interconnections and the process of composition as basic elements of the musical process.

Adorno claims that the perpetual search for meaning, together with attempts to represent a recognizable reality, are what place traditional European art music firmly within the Culture Industry (in particular, he refers to music post-Beethoven). Both of these processes commodify the musical creation by implying a listener who, through the sport of gleaning the object of reference, objectifies the music itself and sees it merely as a medium reflecting on the industrialized reality. *Musique informelle*, on the other hand, does not seek to refer to some external reality and can only effectively be understood in terms of itself and any effect it might have on a listener who chooses to concentrate on the music (1961b: 318–20). However, Adorno complicates this even further by qualifying the freedom of the utopian *musique informelle*. He writes: 'in the last analysis nothing slips through the net of the de-individualized society; it integrates everything, even its polar opposite' (314). This paradox, which suggests that, by definition, any totality will contain within it its absolute negation, refers back to Adorno's urge to focus on relationships as the fundamental musical element, rather than on the note as subject. By concentrating on the network of associations that link the individual components, the music can be seen as a model for a fundamentally social construct. In this light, the music becomes a reflection of society, relating to the social context in ways barely realized before. Thus, Adorno does not suggest that the music is out of time or outside of history. The envisioned *musique informelle* incorporates historicity, precisely by *not* focusing on an externalized context that would only serve to distil history, making it static and thus taking the music *out* of time. By means of an introspective focus on the here-and-now of the piece, that is on the dynamic relationships within the music, the music paradoxically reflects precisely that historical impulse that exists outside it.[8] It is this inevitable historicity that is reflected in the tension between the musical material and the act of composition, i.e. between language and the meaning it invokes, which brings us back to the literature.

Paradise and utopia

Morrison's novel, *Paradise*, embraces the paradox inherent in the notion of any utopian construct. The novel depicts the dissolution of an ideal as the all-black

town of Ruby begins to crumble when the community's static retrospective ideology renders it virtually paralyzed. A utopia is, of course, by definition unattainable and thus as an end the model contains its own failure. This notwithstanding, *Paradise* successfully both contains its impossible utopian ideal and demonstrates its impossibility. Furthermore, it is through the utopian paradox that free jazz, as understood from the prism of Adorno's *musique informelle*, becomes most productive as a tool with which to consider Morrison's novel.[9]

The links between Morrison's paradise and Adorno's utopia are clear. Both concepts envision a time/space that will restore a harmony or balance which has been lost. And yet both recognize that the trauma of loss and of human experience makes a return to the state of innocence impossible. Thus, they each turn to aesthetic production as the only possible medium that will enable a move beyond the social, cultural and individual paralysis of trauma (while already implicitly acknowledging the failure of this transcendence).[10] The reconfiguration of origins and the concentration on loss, absence and trauma with the vision of a new utopian future are all part of this musical moment, in the 1950s and 1960s. (Ornette Coleman, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (1959a) and *The Change of the Century* (1959b), Cecil Taylor's *Looking Ahead* (1958) and *The Futuristic Sounds of Sun Ra* (1961), by Sun Ra are only some of the more explicitly titled visions of a new future.) The strident and relentless drive of free jazz, which takes it beyond immediate access or even perhaps comprehensibility, represents the necessary and even violent (music as an assault on the senses) interruption of an aesthetic sensibility that ceased being able to carry the burden of history. (At this point, I must state explicitly that it is not my contention that Coleman, Coltrane or many of the other free-jazz musicians had necessarily made politically conscious decisions in their musical experimentations. Nor did they all always or necessarily function out of a sense of trauma and loss. However, as Adorno describes, they are inevitably historical. Moreover, reflecting on the effect of the music, on its reception by critics and audiences, its relation to earlier musical forms and the social and political contexts in which it was formed, these implications cannot be ignored.[11])

Both loss and absence are central themes in *Paradise*. The very name of the town as well as the opening chapter in the book signify an absence: Ruby. Ruby Morgan was the sister of the Morgan patriarchs who run the town and she was the mother of K.D., the last remaining heir to the Morgan dynasty. Her death, when the town was still in its infancy, sparks one of the rare occasions when the female community of Ruby stands together as a deciding force: 'The women had no firm opinion until the nephew's mother died. Her funeral – the town's first – stopped the schedule of discussion and its necessity. They named the town after one of their own and the men did not gainsay them' (17). Not only is she absent from the town but Ruby has no voice in the narrative. She is the only central female character in the novel on whom the narration is never focalized and who is not given a single spoken word. And yet hers is the first chapter

of the novel. Ruby, the town and the woman, are given a presence through the narratives of other characters and in this way, Morrison sets the tone of absence in her narrative. It is not necessarily a negative want or lack of essence but instead becomes the positive space which is defined by the presence of other factors. This becomes clearer with less obscure examples of absence in Morrison's novel.[12]

There are numerous examples in the text of events which are never fully described or comfortingly solved for the reader. Two of the more disconcerting instances of this strategy are the truth behind the unsatisfactorily explained death of Mavis's two children and the details of Pallas's experiences, immediately preceding her arrival at the Convent. *Paradise* repeatedly rejects the easy narrative that spells out the details of an event. By refusing to either confirm or reject any of the versions of the absent narratives, the novel presents the reader with the impossibility of such a grand and homogenizing narrative, one which inevitably also includes, but refuses to recognize, countless absent narratives. Morrison thus rewrites the notion of absence into a positive and recognizable, dynamic and evasive, presence – a presence which gradually incorporates the Adornian notion of utopia. (This treatment of the trope of absence is Morrison's response to a central motif in the African-American literary canon, a motif most obviously explored in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, where absence takes the form of invisibility and the sound of the syncopated beat, as described in Chapter 2.)[13]

Another way in which Morrison represents this utopian paradigm of an impossible positive presence is through the religious references – in particular, to the Gnostic gospels introduced in the epigraph to the novel. The image of utopia figures heavily in Morrison's novel on many levels and so understanding the religious undercurrents is crucial for grasping how Morrison proposes to redefine a social utopia in *Paradise*. This heightened focus on spirituality echoes a growing prevalence of spiritual exploration in the music and lives of these free-jazz musicians. LeRoi Jones wrote that,

It is no wonder that many of the new Black musicians are or say they want to be "Spiritual Men" [. . .] or else they are interested in the Wisdom Religion itself, i.e., the rise to spirit. It is expanding the consciousness of the given that they are interested in, not merely expressing what is already there, or alluded to. They are interested in the *unknown*. The mystical. (1966: 188)

John Coltrane describes the relevance of spirituality to his music as follows:

My music is the spiritual expression of what I am – my faith, my knowledge, my being . . . When you begin to see the possibilities of music, you desire to do something really good for people, to help humanity free itself from its hangups. I think music can make the world better and, if I'm qualified, I want

to do it. I'd like to point out to people the divine in a musical language that transcends words. I want to speak to their souls. (Porter, 1999: 232)[14]

Coltrane was not the only free-jazz musician embarking on a spiritual investigation that ran parallel to the musical explorations and to an underlying socialized perspective. Albert Ayler, Alice Coltrane, Sun Ra and Pharoah Sanders to name a few examples, also sought alternative higher truths as a platform for their musical expressions.[15] In their diverse religious explorations, these musicians sought a theoretical and material re-unification of the elements, often abandoning the traditional form of single solos and experimenting with precisely that more complex and simultaneous collective improvisation process which concerns us here. As already mentioned, Ornette Coleman even referred to these moments of conceptual (rather than musical) harmony as 'harmonic unison'. This structure and emphasis are not unlike that echoed in Morrison's use of the Gnostic myth.

The religious imagery and its utopian implications (utopian both in its impossibility and its absolute necessity) which are introduced in the novel's title, *Paradise*, are immediately picked up again with the epigraph:

> For many are the pleasant forms which exist in
>   numerous sins,
>   and incontinencies,
>   and disgraceful passions
>   and fleeting pleasures,
>   which (men) embrace until they become
>   sober
>   and go up to their resting place.
> And they will find me there,
>   and they will live,
>   and they will not die again.

This obviously religious poem is immediately recognizable as a meditation on the differences between life and after-life. Even more crucially, however, the poem is about difference, recognizing difference and making distinctions. The poem is structured along a series of implicit binaries, where the description of the one pole is contrasted by its implied opposite: *sins* and good deeds; *incontinence* and contentment; passions which are disgraceful and fleeting and those which are blessed and eternal. Populations of drunken men who are active and initiate their embrace of these fleeting pleasures are contrasted with the single implicitly female narrator who controls the poem through her narration, and yet she rejects this proactive initiative and chooses, instead, to be 'found'. The poem

ends with the final opposition of repeated reincarnations – an endless and mindless (since intoxicated) repetition of the temporary amusements (recognizably pleasurable but contemptible) – with the eternal afterlife. In this poem of suggested contrasts, only the two final oppositions are made explicit: 'me' (female, singular) and 'them' (male, plural); life and its incessant reiterations versus an eternal life after death. Barring the final stanza, the comparisons being made also point to presence and absence, the explicit and the implicit or, even, knowledge and the unknowable. The poem is able to contain the totality of experience by including the essence of human experience as well as that which lies beyond it, thus subverting the very notion of a binary opposition which spans two mutually exclusive poles. By making the contrasts of woman and man, individual and community explicit in relation to life and eternity, the poet suggests that it is precisely these dualities which manifest the underlying unity of experience. It is through the language which moves from implication to explication that the perceived exclusivity of each pole collapses.

The central role of language (and its relation to gender) becomes even clearer in the larger context from which the poem is derived. The passage with which Morrison opens *Paradise* is part of a larger text: *The Thunder, Perfect Mind.* The latter is a Gnostic Gospel, the *Nag Hammadi*, originally composed in Greek sometime before AD 350. This scripture consists of a series of questions, paradoxes, riddles and exhortations, all meditating on the nature of the female first-person narrator, who represents the Immanent Saviour, and of her relationship to all of humankind. The Gnostic myth of creation is not unrelated to the Judeo-Christian story of Genesis but is in fact incompatible with it.[16] The importance of this myth to *Paradise* warrants an extended explication of the central story.

Most versions of the Gnostic myth of creation begin with the first principle, which is Divine perfection. Although none of the scriptures adequately deals with the question of why, a second principle is formed. Bentley Layton, a prominent scholar of Gnostic texts explains: 'the first principle is a solitary *intellect*, whose only function is to think and whose only possible object of thought is itself, since it alone exists. But its act of thinking is objectified, and this thinking is the second principle' (1987: 14–5). Another version describes the first principle as a 'solitary *eye*, floating in a luminous reflective medium. Its only function is to look, and all it has to see is itself. The reflection that it sees, however, is the second principle' (15). This second principle is called Barbēlo. In addition to this second principle, Layton explains,

[the] perfect omnipotent divine source [. . .] through successive phases of emission produces a carefully structured series of other beings. These emanations are called in Greek "aeons" meaning "realms," "eternities," "ages," or "eternal realms"; [. . .] The last of the aeons is "wisdom" (Sophia). (14)

The story of how Sophia begat the satanic creator of humankind is told in *The Secret Book According to John* (9:28–35, 10:1–6):

> She wanted to show forth within herself an image, without the spirit's [will]; and her consort did not consent. And (she wished to do so) without his pondering: for the person of her maleness did not join in the consent; for she had not discovered that being which was in harmony with her. [. . .]
>
> And she brought forth.
>
> And because of the invincible power within her, her thinking did not remain unrealized. And out of her was shown forth an imperfect product, that was different from her manner of appearance, for she had made it without her consort. And compared to the image of its mother it was misshapen, having a different form. (Layton, 35)

The serpentine offspring of Sophia's solipsistic act of creation is called Ialdabaōth and it is this creature which steals Sophia's powers of creation and – through self-centredness and ignorance – then creates humankind. With the aid of Barbēlo, that is, the second principle, human experience becomes a struggle to wrest the power from the satanic creator and restore it in the divine being. The name of this Gnostic satanic creator of our world is crucial for understanding the myth, and for establishing its relevance for Morrison's novel.

According to Layton, the name *Ialdabaōth* is a combination of two Aramaic components: '"begetter of" (yalᶜd-) and "Sabaōth" [. . .] Hebrew "armies" or "powers", originally the second half of a traditional epithet for Jahweh, "god of the armies" [. . .] By the early Christian period, the single word "sabaōth" had begun to be taken as a name of god' (74–5; fn95). In other words, the serpentine Ialdabaōth (Satan) is the begetter of the heavenly armies, that is, the god of Israel (Ialdabaōth is described as the god of Israel in *The Reality of the Rulers*, another Gnostic scripture). This heretical rewriting of the story of Genesis demands that humankind strive to shake the yoke of the Armies of God which are the product of solipsistic concentration on self: as seen in the passage above, Sophia did not recognize her oneness with the other elements and this arrogance gave birth to the deformed Ialdabaōth. This, in turn, though morally ambiguous, looked inwards (not outwards seeing a reflection, as did the divine first principle) and created an extension of self in Adam. The focus on self is in fact the creation of difference: individuality necessarily suggests a distinction from the other. The system by which this difference is given form is indicated by a further meaning of the creator's name.

Ialdabaōth, alternately spelled Yaldabaōth, can also be seen to derive from Hebrew: 'yalda' means '(she) gave birth to'; 'ba-oth' means 'at the letter'. Thus: she gave birth with the letter, or with language. Yet a third common spelling of the name: Altabaōth – again from Hebrew – means 'she rose with the letter'. The first striking consequence of these denotations relates to the gender of

the creator. Whereas in the English translations of Bentley Layton and that of George W. MacRae, Ialdabaōth is referred to either as masculine or neuter, the name itself suggests a feminine entity. The resulting androgyny clearly demonstrates the implied harmony inherent in the creator's being, a harmony unrecognized or rejected in the act of creation. It is precisely this harmony which the narrator of *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* urges humankind to strive for.

Furthermore, these alternate denotations crucially relate to the role of language. This creator both rose (*alta-*) and procreated (*ialda-*) at the moment that language emerges (*ba-oth*).[17] Language is the systematization of difference and of differentiation. Thus, humankind is both the progenitor and the product of language. Moreover, the latter two possible definitions of the name differ in agency: where the one actively creates, gives birth, the other is much more passive, simply rising with the letter, almost as though a result of the letter, an afterthought even.[18] The paradoxes of the creator who is both man and woman, parent and offspring, agent and subject all culminate in language and function importantly in Morrison's *Paradise* and are further illuminated through the relation to free jazz.

In addition to the links between the poem and the central motifs of the novel, the move from 'Paradise' of the title to a heretical interpretation of the story of creation, in the epigraph, alerts the reader to the fallible subjectivity of the historical narrative and to the complexity of origins. Again, this pattern can be seen to reflect the general disruption of linearity in the various manifestations of free jazz. The early reference to a Gnostic text aligns the novel with a tradition of scepticism or of alternate grand narratives, disturbing the grand narrative of encoded history which dominates Morrison's *Paradise*. Moreover, the fact that the precise origins of the scripture on which the epigraph is based cannot be identified points to the key impossibility of a definitive retrospect. This impossibility is mirrored in the project undertaken by Patricia (Pat) Best, in the novel. Pat is the descendent of one of the New Fathers of Ruby, founded after the scattering of Haven, but she feels – or is made to feel – an outsider because her father was the first to 'violate the blood rule'. He married a wife 'with no last name, a wife without people, a wife of sunlight skin, a wife of racial tampering' (195, 197). What began as a 'collection of family trees; the genealogies of each of the fifteen families' that founded Ruby, soon turned into a private journal in which Pat explores the underlying emotional logic perpetuated in the community's mythology (187). As she traces the genealogies of the families, the convoluted communal structure which inevitably leads to almost incestuous inbreeding reveals the fundamental racial mentality that is the motivating force for the community.[19] What Pat calls 8R, or eight-rock blood, represents those first nine families who were:

Blue-black people, tall and graceful, whose clear, wide eyes gave no sign of what they really felt about those who weren't 8-rock like them. Descendents of those who had been in Louisiana Territory when it was French, when it was

Spanish, when it was French again, when it was sold to Jefferson and when it became a state in 1812 [. . .] In 1890 they had been in the country for one hundred and twenty years. (193)

These were people who began to realize a new basis of difference: 'The sign of racial purity they had taken for granted had become a stain' (194). Paul Gilroy describes the 'biopolitical impulse to present the body as a cipher of solidarity' (2000: 260). The proud history of the Old Fathers and the legendary trauma of what they call the 'Disallowing' which led to the foundation of Haven and then of Ruby have been reduced to an epidermal signification which embodies their bitter sense of betrayal: 'Now they saw a new separation: light-skinned against black' (194). Prizing the blue-black of the 8-Rocks, then, becomes a tangible means of preserving those moral, historical and emotional elements with which Ruby was founded. But as this novel illustrates, the inscription of trauma on the body is not sufficient to supersede variations within the community.[20]

It is the inherited perception of an 'uncorruptible worthiness' (194), together with the seeping realization of the problems this image presents, that pervades and pollutes the imagination of the men who rule Ruby and strengthens its barriers against outsiders: 'Unadulterated and unadulteried 8-rock blood held its magic as long as it resided in Ruby' (217). Race thus becomes transformed into a physical space, recalling a parallel formulation offered by Gilroy, who illuminates the dangerous implications of thinking of modernity as a region rather than a period (2000: 95). Transposing ideas of enlightenment and culture onto a geo-political map inescapably and dangerously reduces these ideas to all-too familiar dualities such as primitive-developed, barbaric-civilized, catastrophe-progress. Framed as a series of questions, Gilroy highlights the problem of exclusivity inherent in this kind of thinking as it appears in *Paradise*:

Can an engagement with translocal histories of suffering help to accomplish the shift from Europe-centered to cosmopolitan ways of writing history? [. . .] Should [modernity] become nothing much more than the distinctive burden of particular groups, which, though it points beyond their particularity to an emergent universalism, has grave difficulties in making this desirable adjustment? [. . .] Are metahistorical, philosophical, and sociological speculations undone by microhistorical narratives which add so much texture and local color that generalization becomes impossible and we become politically inert [. . .] ? (2000: 95)

In other words, it is precisely that logic which should have paved the road towards an inclusive universalism that is perverted into a destructive exclusivity. Subsequently, as Pat suddenly realizes, 'everything that worries them must come from women' (217). By fiercely controlling who has babies by whom, the bloodline is preserved and continued. The interlinking of race and gender becomes

clear in the attitude of most of the townsfolk towards the Convent women who are *other*-ed from Ruby in almost every way. Not only do these women find a male presence unnecessary but they are as far from the 8-Rock rule of racial purity as possible. Furthermore, as Jill Matus comments in response to the dramatic opening sentence of the novel, 'They shoot the white girl first': 'colour was never an issue among the women of the Convent and [the arresting opening line] underlines, therefore, the way gender and race are rigid and defining categories from the posse's point of view' (1998: 165).

Their resistance to this rigid categorization and the violence it engenders are redolent of the resistance of free jazz to the confines of predetermined categories. Ornette Coleman's contention that 'the use of prearranged chord progressions (changes) stifled jazz improvisation' made him and his music the topic of controversy. He claimed that,

> Using changes already laid out gives you a place to start and lets the audience know what you're doing. I mean if they can whistle the song on your solo. But that means you're not playing all your own music, or all the music you're playing's not yours. Playing popular tunes or tunes based on popular tunes has got to hold you back. (Porter, 1999: 203)

The restricting nature of preconceived musical structures that inevitably introduces a body of associations thus, according to Coleman, prevents any act of true creativity. While the violence demonstrated in Morrison's depiction is focused on the direct implications of these categories (i.e. race and gender), in the music the violence is effected in the process of shattering these categories.

The image of the creator reverberates in the figure of mother and the theme of motherhood which are central to the novel. This motif exposes one of the greatest threats to the men of Ruby because it points to the ultimate difference between men and women: child-bearing. Free jazz, which offers a new structure for musical narrative, a structure that challenges the distinction between order and chaos and rejects the presumption of temporal linearity, reconfigures the structure of creativity. Defining itself in terms of a rejection of past structures and emphasizing an on-going and spontaneous present, in free jazz the beginning and the end are always both on-going. Creativity becomes a collective project which subverts the more traditional model of maternity that inevitably contains within it the potential for its most extreme corruption – a woman killing her child. Indeed, motherhood in virtually all its forms is represented in the novel.

The first mother to appear in *Paradise* is Mavis Albright who abandons her family after her twin babies have suffocated in her car. Dovey Morgan is unable to have children and her sister Soane lost her sons in the war. When rejected by K.D., Arnette Fleetwood claims she was raped and, despising her unborn child, violently aborts it – only to wildly proclaim its healthy birth once the

father marries her. Sweetie Fleetwood yearns for a healthy child but spends her
years tirelessly caring for her sickly babies instead. Perhaps the most powerful
manifestation of motherhood is in the relationship of Connie and 'Mother',
whose name is, tellingly, Mary Magna: great Mary. Mother brought Connie,
an abandoned nine-year-old living in the streets of Portugal, over to the United
States and gave her a new life. The adoptive mother-daughter relationship
between the two women is sealed, though inversed, at the moment of Mother's
death:

> On that last day, Consolata had climbed into the bed behind her and [. . .]
> raised up the feathery body and held it in her arms and between her legs. The
> small white head nestled between Consolata's breasts and so the lady had
> entered death like a birthing. (223)

This scene is crucial for making the link between birth and death that is
entwined in the characters of Eve and Mary, figures whose existence reverber-
ates in Morrison's female characters, primarily in those of the Convent. These
women seek one another's company as a way of overcoming the separate trauma
of each of their experiences. Unlike Soane, Sweetie, Arnette or even Billie Delia
(who temporarily sought out the haven of the Convent when denied the home
of her mother), the Convent women find a home in each other's presence. It is
only through this community that they begin to exorcize their pain and to see
themselves truly.[21] Thus, these women do not represent some Edenic prototype
of womanhood, but through their empowering community the women find a
new way of living in their world. They are 'black bodacious Eves, unredeemed
by Mary' (18) and like Eve they represent the overpowering potential of evil as
well as the ultimate possibility of good. These women are not *either* Eve *or* Mary
but both Eve and all the Marys: they are innocent and experienced, mother and
lover, virgin and prostitute, seduced and seducer, both the beginning of all
things and the death of them all.

This focus on the empowering quality of the community which reclaims a
past is reminiscent of LeRoi Jones's description of the importance of collective
improvisation:

> Albert Ayler has talked about his music as a contemporary form of collective
> improvisation (Sun-Ra and John Coltrane are working in this area as well).
> Which is where our music was when we arrived on these shores, a collective
> expression [. . .] The return to collective improvisations, which finally, the
> West-oriented, the whitened, say, is chaos, is the *all-force* put together, and is
> what is wanted [. . .] It seems now to me that some of bassist Charlie Mingus'
> earlier efforts, e.g., *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, provide a still earlier version of this
> kind of massive orchestral breakthrough. And called rightly, too, I think [. . .]
> the first man to stand. As what we are, a first people [. . .] now evolving, to
> recivilize the world. (1966: 194–5)

Thus, for Jones, the collective improvisation is a reclamation of the past and of the narratorial authority. What is taken by critics to be chaos becomes a process of self-affirmative recivilization which takes into account both the history and the future of this process.

In light of the epigraph, *Paradise* becomes the locus for struggle of the immanent feminine Saviour to regain the power of creation from the Armies of God (though, as will be shown presently, this notion of salvation is also problematized in the novel). The warrior imagery of this myth is introduced in the opening scene of *Paradise*. Here, the battle has become a hunt. The nine patriarchs of Ruby are armed and determined to root out the evil manifest in the lives of the Convent women. The novel opens with an omniscient third-person narrator and then shifts to the first of many focalized voices. The narrative voice asserts a moral confidence and righteousness which seems ominous but clear. 'The proof they had been collecting since the terrible discovery in the spring could not be denied: the one thing that connected all these catastrophes was in the Convent. And in the Convent were those women' (11). As the novel progresses, the moral ambiguity of these men, not unlike that of the mythic Ialdabaōth, becomes more pronounced. Their guiding motivation is an inward-looking self-preservation rather than an outward search for that harmony embodied in the Convent. The Convent is itself depicted as an almost paradisal space – not an Eden of innocence, but a haven for those who can no longer bear their burdens of experience alone. The women of the Convent help, heal, nurse, feed and comfort one another and the people of Ruby with sustenance that seems unable to grow anywhere else, and yet all the more threatening, precisely for this reason.[22] Purveyors of the 'New Music' too were more often than not deemed aggressively exclusive and both alien and alienating.

The threat posed by the Convent women arises from their perceived difference from other women of Ruby. Each of the five women living there has rejected, or has been rejected by, the traditions of society and through their shameless manlessness they have become monstrous in the eyes of the men who have come to hunt them.

> They exchange knowing looks when they learn that each woman sleeps not in a bed, like normal people, but in a hammock [. . .] No clothes in the closets, of course, since the women wore no-fit dirty dresses and nothing you could honestly call shoes. But there are strange things nailed or taped to the walls or propped in a corner [. . .] a letter written in blood so smeary its satanic message cannot be deciphered [. . .] But what alarms the two men most is the series of infant booties and shoes ribboned to a cord hanging from a crib in the last bedroom they enter. (7)

The language used in this passage suggests something unnatural and evil. The men are most threatened by the babies' clothing because these represent precisely that inherent power of creation that is denied them. Moreover, the clothes

remind each of the men of his own aborted, dying, dead or miscarried baby. Their absolute powerlessness in the face of these two realities incenses them and, in their minds, confirms the overpowering threat of the women they try to kill. Thus, again, the themes of the epigraphic poem and the mythology whence it is taken reverberate crucially in the narrative: the irreconcilable difference between men and women is the ability to give birth. This difference, here, brings death.

The central themes of the epigraph, which sings of the female struggle to regain the power and envisions the final return of harmonic unison, resonate throughout the novel. These themes become virtually explicit in the final scenes of the book where the Convent women are envisaged as redeeming warriors: 'When will they return [. . .] with blazing eyes, war paint and huge hands to rip up and stomp down this prison calling itself a town? [. . .] She hoped with all her heart that the women were out there, darkly burnished, biding their time, brass-metaling their nails, filing their incisors – but out there' (308). This warrior imagery, envisioning a fierce battle, is very different from the stealthy hunting scene with which the novel opens. After this powerful image visualized by Billie Delia, a young woman of Ruby who is suffocated by the stultifying rule of tradition, these hair-cropped, arms-bearing, camouflaged women commune to 'bridle, without being trampled, the monsters that slavered them' (303). Moving together in and out of the experiences of one another, these women dissolve the distinction between self and others, subject and object, individual and community. While they begin to externalize their emotions and their experiences onto the templates drawn on the cellar floor, they also travel together into each other's minds and memories (262–5). The final moment of the novel shifts from the scenes of recognition and reconciliation to a fantastical and musical scene:

> In ocean hush a woman black as firewood is singing. Next to her is a younger woman whose head rests on the singing woman's lap. Ruined fingers troll the tea brown hair. All the colors of seashells – wheat, roses, pearl – fuse in the younger woman's face. Her emerald eyes adore the black face framed in cerulean blue [. . .] Now they will rest before shouldering the endless work they were created to do down here in Paradise. (318)

It is the song-filled rainbow-coloured feminine embrace that will put to rest the sin of experience-as-division and, through the perfectly human and earthly process of mutual recognition, the attainment of paradise becomes possible. (In a 1998 interview, Toni Morrison expresses regret at capitalizing the final 'Paradise': 'The whole point is to get paradise off its pedestal, as a place for anyone, to open it up for passengers and crew'. Thus through the novel, paradise becomes an earthly, universal and universalizing space, transcending those dangers Gilroy lists.) The opening poem of the novel thus offers a new way of

conceiving the present: it presents not a bridge to the past but a new temporal order in which the past is strikingly and productively present.

Although the link between the conceptual utopia described and free jazz may not always be straightforward or explicit, the music and the literature clearly grapple with parallel ideas and problems and the solutions of one inform the development of the other. Free jazz (both in its inception in the late 1950s-early 1960s and in more contemporary free jazz) offers a new model for the musical narrative. This model blurs the distinction between chaos and order where the logic for a piece emerges from within (as foreshadowed in Adorno's conception of *musique informelle*). By complicating the divide between subject and object, free jazz reconfigures the relation between the individual and the collective and demands a temporally challenging but ongoing engagement with its own expression. The result of the often violent manifestations of these musical explorations is a reconceptualization of the notion of history, of the past and how it affects the present. Morrison's novel, I suggest, explores literary counterparts to these musical/political ideas.

Language of absence

The interplay of loss and absence are nowhere clearer than in Morrison's use of language in *Paradise*. Recalling one of the defining characteristics of Adorno's *musique informelle*, whereby language itself is centrally thematized, here the language is so much more than the medium by which the themes are elaborated. In fact, these themes are manifest in the use of language itself. This process dramatically alters the experience of reading: because of its central thematic role in the novel, the language becomes insistently self-reflexive, creating a tension between immediate outside references – or lack thereof – and a new system of signification that emerges from within the text. In his study of the way in which art contends with the implications of Auschwitz, Josh Cohen writes that '[t]he untranslatable metaphor, as the taking place of a word without reference beyond itself, lets the unsayable be heard at the heart of speech' (2003: 113). The trauma of human experience becomes both unsayable and implicit in a new system of references. Morrison's *Paradise* similarly explores ways in which language can become the central arena in which history may be re-conceptualized. In other words, Morrison's restructuring of language inevitably jars her readers out of any complacent acceptance of history and racialized thinking. By refusing easy racial categorization and its implications in language, Morrison unsettles her readers and forces them to reconsider the function and definitions of race.

Paradise is not Morrison's first or only exploration into the racial implications of language. In her 1983 short story, 'Recitatif', Morrison's focus on language and on its relation to music are much more straightforward. The story describes the relationship between two girls when they meet at five different points during

their lives. The reader is told that one girl is African American and the other is white but is left to determine which is which. The narrative drops hints and clues, but any attempt at resolution becomes a process in reductive stereotypification. Nevertheless, the story is propelled by the backdrop of racial politics (and its effects on the economy and family structure of the characters's lives) as it changes each time the girls meet. Thus Morrison reveals the two-dimensionality of racialized thinking and demands a new conceptualization of race and ethnic identification, effectively renewing the language of representation. The connotations of the short story title are paramount. *Recitative* is defined as 'a style of musical declamation, between singing and ordinary speech, used esp. in the dialogue and narrative parts of an opera or oratoria' (*OED* 2501). It bridges the gap between music and language and tends to carry the burden of the narrative. Thus, by implication, Morrison's new language, which seeks to create a new understanding of ethnicity, realizes the recitative nature of the narrative. The short story which refuses any conventional linguistic racial markers and yet is centrally concerned with the implications of race is formed into a recitatif – a musical declamation which transforms this linguistic absence into a conceptual presence, a new and musical narrative of race. This is not the *with it* of Schoenberg's query, but the concomitant interplay of form and content, described by Adorno's *musique informelle*. In *Paradise*, Morrison extends this linguistic project into a much longer and more volatile process.

The first sentence of the novel is a chilling and remarkably telling beginning to a text that deals centrally with violence, race and gender – the three key linguistic components of this phrase: 'They shoot the white girl first'. The ambiguous and yet implicit familiarity of 'they' is contrasted with the anonymous and yet more descriptive 'the white girl'. In her opening sentence, then, Morrison has created both a community and its disruption in the form of an outsider – a white girl. (That this outsider is a white girl hints at the important role that black masculinity will play in the narrative.) Morrison implicates the reader in the insider-outsider dynamic through the syntax of this first sentence. The pronoun suggests that the reader already knows who 'they' are, and that there is a white girl there; the reader is, in other words, an insider and is thus drawn into the action of the sentence. In contrast to this associative impulse stands the explicit introduction of the white girl, which both highlights her difference and broaches it. The white girl is both visible and invisible. In *Between Camps*, Paul Gilroy moves beyond what he describes as the 'doomed attempts to produce coherent racial categories by picking representative combinations of certain phenotypes'.

> It is far more interesting that this race-producing activity required a synthesis of logos with icon, of formal scientific rationality with something else – something visual and aesthetic [. . .] Together they resulted in a specific relationship to, and mode of observing, the body'. (35)

In *Between Camps*, Gilroy is primarily concerned with contemporary changes to this process, exploring the shifting relationship between logos and icon. In what Gilroy refers to as *postracialism*, ideas of race which relate to the biological are contracted to a concentration on genetic microcosms, and are no longer founded on a visual or visible basis. Gilroy explores the nature of racialism in a world where notions of exclusivity are still held but can no longer be externally recognized. The white girl in *Paradise* and the ambiguous ethnicity of the characters in 'Recitatif' exemplify both the invisibility and the persistent pervasiveness of race in a postracial world. As becomes clear from these examples, however, for Morrison, ethnic identity is fundamentally linguistic as well.

Notions of exclusivity are further complicated, moreover, as the reader cannot help being implicated in the violence of 'they shoot'; the reader is implicated because of the syntax but also because of an inevitable reluctance to identify with the outcast, the outsider who is shot. Finally, this scene (and the passages at the end of the novel which return to this moment) offers the sole explicit mention of the white girl (explicit in the description, though clearly not in the identity, of the girl). Thus, in this jarring first sentence Morrison introduces the central forces of the narrator, which then moves back in time and moves on to fulfil the inertia set in motion at the start. This opening encapsulation of the work's elements is as different from that of Morrison's *Jazz*, as is the structure of *Free Jazz*'s first moments from the thematic statements that often introduce a bebop piece. Whereas the latter work opens with a clear and complete statement of narrative (and melodic/harmonic) kernel, in *Free Jazz* as in *Paradise* the opening moment refuses this comforting explicitness and adopts, instead, a much more complex structure that – through its very indirectness, through absence – compels and foreshadows the structure that follows.

Josh Cohen's summary of Adorno's position echoes this structure and links it with the utopian ideal described above. He writes that, 'Art is not the fulfilment but the maintenance of its promise' (53).[23] Thus, art is premised on absence and its effect arises from the tension of anticipation. It is through linguistic absence and anticipated fulfilment that Morrison succeeds in reformulating ethnicity (in its social, political, aesthetic, as well as linguistic implications). This focus on language as central to conceptualizing ethnicity comes to the foreground in the recurring debate on the message etched into the lip of the communal town-oven.

The oven encapsulates the central thematic concerns of the text: community, religion, gender, memory, history and historical narrative, and these motifs converge in the debate surrounding the oven's inscription. The oven was built and then rebuilt by two generations of town patriarchs and stands finally and immovably at the centre of Ruby where even Deek Morgan must drive around it.

Initially, in pre-Ruby days, the oven effectively became the first home for the people of Haven, a physical and emotional contrast to the homelessness of their slavery and then of their exile.[24] In the minds of the forefathers of Ruby the

oven becomes the physical representation of the town's historical mythology. In a characteristic display of proprietorship, Deek Morgan refuses to acknowledge any universal claim to this historical narrative nor any room for adapting the narrative to accommodate the passing of time and the experiences that accompany it: '[The younger generation] don't want to give it nothing. They want to kill it, change it into something they made up [. . .] That Oven already has a history. It doesn't need you to fix it' (86).

Deek associates change with death (a link violently pursued in the attack on the Convent women) and cannot see his own role in 'making up' the history of the oven. Significantly, even this fixed conception of history is not the uniform gospel which the Morgans demand it be. For the mothers of Ruby, the oven manifests the skewed priorities adopted by the patriarchs.

> The women nodded when the men took the Oven apart, packed, moved and reassembled it. but privately they resented the truck space given over to it – rather than a few more sacks of seed, rather than shoats or even a child's crib [. . .] If the plaque was so important [. . .] why hadn't they just taken it by itself, left the bricks where they had stood for fifty years? (103)

The delight the men took in the physical and emotional investment of taking apart and putting back together of the oven, and their insistence on reinforcing the words on the plaque with bricks and mortar, reveals their understanding and their anxiety about the ephemerality of language, and exposes a crucial gender divide in *Paradise*. Throughout the text there is a general contrast between a male need for tangibility and a female acceptance of the ephemeral.[25]

The debate about the inscription remains unresolved in a gradually strengthening infusion of a female sensibility into the narrative. The final scenes of the novel bring into focus the subtle agency of the female characters (much like the paradoxically deliberate and controlling decision to 'be found' described by the narrator in the Gnostic epigraph). The women of the Convent who resist their attackers and refuse the death they bring with them (the reader must decide for herself whether these women survived the attack or whether in a stylistic turn to magical realism these women simply defy death) are extreme examples of that empowering femininity which ultimately refuses a conclusion to the debate, leaving the inscription open: '. . . the Furrow of His Brow'.

The implications of the various suggested inscriptions on the oven lip highlight the inevitable ideological inflection of language which Morrison foregrounds. The crucial differences between 'Beware' and 'Be', the two words suggested to replace the missing word on the inscription, articulate the crux of the African-American ethnic-identity making processes, which are here shown to be irreducible to any single unified signifier. 'Beware the Furrow of His Brow' is religiously inflected and suggests the vengeful and fearsome God of the Old Testament. 'Be the Furrow of His Brow', on the other hand, hints at a much

closer affiliation to extreme Puritan versions of the New Testament notion of God, manifesting Himself in human actions. Moreover, the socio-political implications of this message exhibit the ideological empowerment of African Americans by the Black Power movement: 'It's not being [God]; it's being His instrument, His justice. As a race [. . .] If we follow His commandments, we'll be His voice, His retribution. As a people— ' (87). The younger generation of Ruby seek to reclaim their religious and communal heritage and to transform it into an instrument of divine and social justice. The presumption that any community can become one voice or act 'as a race' or 'as a people' reveals how the second construal of the oven's message is as susceptible as the first to the crushing dangers of the ethnically totalizing force which paralyses Ruby.

The third suggestion for the words of the inscription is significantly absent from public debate and is confined to a private reflection. Anna Flood sees the town scorn the Convent women in order to avoid coming to terms with the tension rending the people of Ruby asunder and reflects that '[t]he young people were wrong. Be the Furrow of *Her* Brow' (159). In this gendered reversal of the existing motto, Anna changes the nature of the presence dominating the inscription. Coming as a direct response to the expulsion of the Convent women from a town gathering, the feminine pronoun ceases being a direct – if implicit – reference to divine power and is deliberately conflated with human, feminine agency. Anna thus anticipates the fantastical episodes of resolution and reconciliation undertaken by these scorned women with which the narrative closes. In these scenes the militant imagery already described is juxtaposed with peace making, further complicating the proposed message of the oven. In Anna's reflection, the 'furrowed brow' thus need not be the threat of fury it is taken to mean by the men of Ruby; it may also be a brow wrinkled with worry or with sadness. This third suggestion for the oven's inscription adds new dimensions to the possibilities of the oven's significance and, due to its private articulation, it precludes the totalizing force of the other two.

The dramatic differences between the possibilities, the grave and vital implications of each and the violence and emotional investment that define the debate recall the virtually identical foundation of free jazz. Violence and emotion, raw sensuality and meticulous and deliberate investigation of the possibilities of musical language as they emerge through collective composition create a no-holds-barred challenge to the very bases of meaning, personal and collective, on which music heretofore rested. These tensions between private and public (emotion and violence, individual and social) responses to the linguistic conceptualization of the oven and the implications of the deliberate complexity of language are recognized by Pat Best who considers the rule of racial purity which is never spoken of,

except for the hint in words Zechariah forged for the Oven. More than a rule. A conundrum: "Beware the Furrow of His Brow," in which the "You"

(understood), vocative case, was not a command to the believers but a threat
to those who had disallowed them. It must have taken him months to think
up those words – just so –to have multiple meanings: to appear stern, urging
obedience to God, but slyly not identifying the understood proper noun or
specifying what the Furrow might cause to happen or to whom. (195)

Pat's speculation raises the question to whom, in fact, is this message addressed?
Who is implicated by the rule and by the threat of Ruby? Is the message and its
addressee implicitly understood and thus exclusive, reserved only for insiders?
Or is the message deliberately obscure and open to interpretation, thus inclu-
sive of all those willing to engage with the linguistic – and through this the
communal, ethnic and even gender – conundrum? As usual, the text defies any
straightforward resolution of these puzzles but intimates that it is the very fact
of the question that pushes forward the identity-making processes: this is pre-
cisely the role of those words forged on the lip of the oven. The oven which has
long since ceased being functional has been transformed into a reified sign
upon which the men and women of Ruby depend. However, by fixating on that
sign and transforming it into the corner-stone (both figurative and literal) of
the community, the town folk render it dysfunctional as a productive identify-
ing reference point. It is because of this that the dispute over the naming of the
oven becomes the catalyst for the violent collapse of Ruby. The very fact of
the debate and its irresolution demonstrate the diverse experiences of African-
American history, a diversity which must be recognized and embraced in order
to arrest the decay taking hold of Ruby. Josh Cohen writes that '[t]he name is
the promise of pure singularity which language, bound inextricably to the gen-
erality of the concept, must always betray' (53). This quotation is taken from
Cohen's discussion on Adorno and his response to Hölderlin's poetry. In that
context, the notion of *naming* is inextricably involved with the Judaic inuttera-
bility of God's name; thus the Name immediately associates language with the
divine and with the irreconcilable tension between them.[26] The process of nam-
ing (of the oven as well as of the characters in *Paradise*) embodies this paradox
of language and manifests the impossibility of representation. Some examples
of the characters who have multiple names whose meanings resonate in the novel
are: Gigi/Grace; Pallas/Divine; Kofi/Coffee/Zechariah/'Big Papa' (in addition
to the biblical implications of Zechariah as described by Pat, the name derives
from Hebrew and means 'God Remembered', alluding to the crucial role of the
Morgan memory in the narrative). Furthermore, Save-Marie is both a startling
and suggestive invocation to save Mary, and as Rev. Misner points out, sounds
like 'save me' (307). Finally, as Save-Marie dies Divine is born: a boy whose name
manifests the emerging reconciliation of the polarized forces in the novel: he is
a boy, named after a woman – reminiscent of the gendered harmony of divine
creation in the Gnostic myth. A child conceived implicitly in violence and rape

is cherished and loved. By giving him her mother's name, Pallas offers a microcosmic remedy to the decay of Ruby: Divine is the emergence of a new generation.

The impossibility of representation that is paradoxically manifest in the process of naming recalls parallel processes in *Free Jazz*. Coleman's recording re-enacts this process as it simultaneously drives listeners to identify the musical communication while resisting any pre-determined identification. By displacing a familiar over-arching musical structure (as in the sequence of solos, for example) onto an unfamiliar melodic and harmonic aural space, Coleman both creates the expectation of recognition (one which leads the listener outside the piece to identify the referent) and denies it, concentrating the musical momentum on the musical language and its processes of articulation.

Adornian self-reflexivity and parataxis

Language thus takes on a very self-consciously thematic role in *Paradise*. Through this self-reflexive system of expression, Morrison explores race and ethnic identity by means of a language that can only circumscribe an absent space; intimating that, indeed, ethnic identity can perhaps only be expressed negatively – through absence. Josh Cohen addresses a parallel phenomenon when, writing about Adorno's work on Hölderlin, he comments that,

> there is no positive means of expressing the "living being", for positive expression carries language into the order of the concept which kills it. But this death is also what allows the living being to appear negatively, in the form of the lament over its sacrifice. (54)

To pursue this parallelism suggests, then, that race becomes aligned with Spirit, with the Absolute or the 'living being'. While the theological overtones of the comparison are problematic, the fundamental centrality of race to Morrison's aesthetic representation of lived experience, where ethnic identity becomes simultaneously intangible and vitally elemental to any understanding of self or attempt at communicating with an-other, enables this comparison. Moreover, comparing Morrison's treatment of race in *Paradise* to an Adornian notion of aesthetics further suggests that the language in which Morrison chooses to manifest this 'living being' takes the form of a lament at its failure to do so – sacrificing the specificity of an object by representing it in a homogenizing language. For Adorno, however, 'this "failure" signifies not [. . .] modern art's state of misrecognition but on the contrary, its truth' (Cohen, 51). In other words, the Spirit does not exist as such but is, by definition, a process striving for this existence.

For Adorno, the poetic strategy which manifests this promise of language is parataxis: 'the insinuation into the Absolute of the difference promised by the name' (54). Where the Absolute suggests an all-inclusive universality, the name is the recognition of difference (although as described, also paradoxically, the name refuses this difference at the moment of utterance). Adorno defines parataxis as 'artificial disturbances that evade the logical hierarchy of a subordinating syntax' (Adorno, 1974: 131). The parataxis refuses the hierarchy of the divine fulfilment of the promise of language: the ultimate conflation of sign and essence. By coordinating clauses with no conjunctions (which is the linguistic definition of parataxis), the writer refuses to privilege one moment of a sentence over another, thus levelling any hierarchical tendency of language or of interpretation in the reader's mind. Moreover, by establishing an immediate link between the clauses while refusing to characterize this link, the author turns the language in on itself, making it self-reflexive: to understand the relationship between the clauses the reader cannot rely on a common 'logical hierarchy' or pre-established synthesis but must concentrate on the logic emerging from precisely that utterance. Arguably, the paralleling gesture of parataxis also subverts the temporality of subordinating syntax which suggests that one clause logically follows the other. Here, the two can be said to exist simultaneously, creating a polyphonic – or, more accurately, a Bakhtinian dialogic – utterance. (There is a subtle difference between the implications of the two terms in this context. Whereas *polyphony* simply describes a simultaneous multiplicity of voices, *dialogic* hints at the relationship between the voices.)

It is this self-reflexive, transient and dialogic nature of parataxis which begins to recall the type of collective improvisation explored by Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane. The implications of Adorno's notion of parataxis for the nature of language as difference cast a new light on the collective improvisation of these musicians. The initially jarring moments of ensemble playing in *Free Jazz* and in *Ascension* explore new ways of defining harmony. Marion Brown, the saxophone player, comments in the liner notes on *Ascension* that '[i]n the ensemble sections you get a different idea of what harmony is, or can be'. Thus, much like Adorno's understanding of the paratactical refusal to follow the subordinating law of nature in favour of an artificial maintenance of a balancing tension, so do these musicians adopt a strategy that sustains a tense balance through which they can explore the limits of sound, a dialectical totality, if you will. In the original album notes, Archie Shepp describes the focus of *Ascension* as an 'emphasis on textures rather than [on] the making of an organizational entity'. This notion of aural textures bears out the focus on a harmonic simultaneity of notes that together create this texture. He goes on to say that, 'there was unity, but it was a unity of sounds and textures rather than like an ABA approach. You can hear, in the saxophones especially, a reaching for sound and an exploration of the possibilities of sound'. Transposing Adorno's linguistic concept onto the music highlights the importance of temporality (relation to the past as well as

rhythms of the piece, or poem, itself) and adds an improvisatory dimension to the model. Adorno himself points out the musical nature of parataxis:

> The transformation of language into a serial order whose elements are linked differently than in the judgment is musiclike. [. . .] It is not only the micrological forms of serial transition in a narrow sense, however, that we must think of as parataxis. As in music, the tendency takes over larger structures. (1974: 131–2)

This paratactical construct then highlights innovative aesthetic responses to structures of history for Adorno but also, for our purposes, for free jazz. Ekkehard Jost contrasts the styles of Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, the piano player, on precisely this issue. He identifies two schools, using Archie Shepp's distinction between 'post-Ornette players and "energy-sound players"'.

> In Coleman and his "school," the old swing is integrated into a new context. Cecil Taylor, on the other hand, does not refashion swing by placing it in a new setting, but replaces it entirely by a new quality, energy. (71)

By allowing traditional elements of jazz to exist in his music, the extent to which Coleman also departs from these tradition becomes immediately clear. Taylor, on the other hand, abandons all immediate reference to traditional form and, through the rigorous negation, effectively acknowledges this tradition as he moves away from it. What emerges from this discussion is a model that combines the Adornian use of parataxis with its parallel manifestations in free jazz, and offers a direct opening to consider the effects of the narrative structure in *Paradise*. With this in mind, each chapter becomes a separate voice that embarks on an improvisatory narrative, contributing to a dynamic musical whole.

The novel is divided into nine chapters, each chapter named after a female character. Significantly, the narrative of a community is structured around nine women who are somehow outsiders: Ruby who died before the town was fully built, Patricia whose light-skinned mother marked her as an outsider, Lone who was 'a stolen child,' and Save-Marie, the baby girl whose death was the first in Ruby since that of Ruby herself, together with the five women of the Convent make up the nine chapter names. Linden Peach addresses the paradoxical relationship of inside to outside suggested in the novel: 'Gigi was at Ruby's edge at the same time she had reached its center' (67) (Peach, 2000: 154–6). The complex mythology of Haven, the history of Ruby and the plethora of characters which Morrison introduces are presented in a rather confusing spiral of narratives both within and across the chapters, in what can be seen as an improvisatory exploration of the key elements of the central narrative. Adopting the concept of improvisation, which is by definition dynamic – if not spontaneous – and transient, to a textual medium is far from straightforward, but

nevertheless appropriate. Morrison creates a dizzying narrative structure with numerous shifts in time and in narrative focalization in each chapter. In 'Ruby', for example, there are no less than twenty-one temporal shifts, and in 'Divine' over twenty shifts in narrative focalization. The results frustrate any tendency for facile anticipations and demands an engagement with each immediate moment of the narrative (this focus is complicated, but not contradicted, by the simultaneous impulse of the narrative that leads readers outside that moment in search of its concurrent references elsewhere). This structure parallels the musical innovations of free jazz improvisers, who explore the musical implications of a particular moment, melody or motif and create a dizzying response whose central logic is often self-reflexive. (These seemingly chaotic narrative constructions demand an intellectual attentiveness akin to that demanded by musicians in free jazz. See below for an elaboration on the role of the reader/listener.)

Similarly, as the chapters progress, the underlying logic of each, represented by the nominal female character, is gradually exposed. This is not to suggest that the woman is the central character of that chapter but that she manifests the central themes or becomes the catalyst for the actions. (Significantly, the links between the themes concentrated in one chapter and the story of the woman underlying it are often only made clear elsewhere.) The fourth chapter, 'Seneca', for example, moves through four different home environments before describing Seneca's own homelessness. Seneca was abandoned as a child by her teenage mother and lived alone in the empty house for days before being found by child-services and moved out to a series of foster homes. The emotional vastness of her empty house is reflected in different kinds of emptiness described in the Ruby homes. Dovey's increasing estrangement from her husband Steward feeds her preference for staying in the empty house in town, rather than in her home with her husband. Steward, who keenly feels his wife's distance, prefers to ride all night rather than sleep in the empty house. The emptiness that weighs on the second Morgan household is the barrenness left by the death of their two sons, a vacuum that sucks out the breathe from Soane's lungs, who feels the air is thinning.

These two elements, that of home and emptiness or loss meet in Seneca's own name. *Seneca* has a plethora of meanings: it is the collective name of the upper Iroquois peoples; a member of an Iroquois Indian people, one of five of the original Iroquois confederation; and it is the language of this people. Although there is only a subtle Native American presence in *Paradise* (in comparison to *Song of Solomon*, for example, where the references are much more explicit) Morrison clearly does not see the Native American history as entirely separate or separable from an African-American narrative.[27] The Iroquois confederation that was established to combat the occupying forces of the English and the French in the sixteenth century and their eventual displacement is

echoed in the novel, in the story of the nine families who joined together after the 'Disallowing' in Oklahoma, and who finally established Haven. The legend of their displacement and how they finally found this haven, a legend related in this chapter, is paralleled by the tale of Seneca's recurring displacement: from her home, to foster care, to the manipulative arms of unloving partners, and the story of how, by following the footsteps of another, she finally finds her home.

There are many other parallels between Seneca's own story and those related in the chapter named after her: her own losses are echoed in Dovey's list of Steward's losses (82–3); her urgent peacemaking tendencies stand in direct contrast to the heated debates over the oven; the conflict of talk, back-talk and the inability to communicate that pervades Ruby stands in opposition to *Seneca* which was a language uniting a people. Finally, the very geography of the town is inscripted masochistically on Seneca's own body.

> [A]s Ruby grew, streets were laid on the west side of Central, and although these newer streets were continuations of those on the east – situated right across from them – they acquired secondary names. So St. John Street on the east become Cross John on the west. St. Luke became Cross Luke. (114)

As we discover in the following chapter, Seneca draws a map of her pain and loneliness with a razor across her body, making little junctions and crossroads every time she hurts. The implication of this parallel suggests that as the town of Ruby continues to grow unchecked, becoming more prosperous but more rotten, the decay that will eventually destroy it from within grows.

> The little streets were narrow and straight, but as soon as she made them they flooded [. . .] Although she had moved the map from her arms to her thighs, she recognised with pleasure the traces of old roads, avenues [. . .] Seneca did another street. An intersection, in fact, for it crossed the one she'd done a moment ago. (260, 262)

By using the same imagery to describe Seneca's self-mutilation and the streets of Ruby, Morrison suggests a similar impulse to self-destruction.

Finally, in a link that becomes particularly relevant for our purposes, Seneca gradually realizes that her self-effacing impulse to create harmony around her is not necessarily the most productive model for human relations. In a later chapter, Seneca has finally learned not to seek and to maintain her idea of harmony. She lets Mavis and Gigi fight uninterrupted and thus to reach their own new concord: 'Once upon a time she would try to separate them, but now she knew better. When they were exhausted they'd stop, and peace would

reign longer than if she interfered' (168). The move to a new way of establishing a harmony, which begins with discord and results in a new logic for reaching concord, is resonant of the developments of free jazz.

In the analogy I am making between the narrative structure of *Paradise* and free jazz, it is not my suggestion that each narrative focalization, concentrated in the separate chapters, is like an instrument. Rather, each chapter can be compared to the musical (narrative) expression each musician (or female character) contributes. In other words, each woman whose name heads the chapters is not to be confused with the very authoritative – though enigmatic – narrator who controls the narrative. This latter voice slips in and out of focalization thus imposing limitations on her own knowledge and then moving beyond them.[28] This pattern raises the impossible question of who, then, is in control of the narrative? Is the narrator genuinely – though variously – limited or is she deliberately manipulating the flow of information, in which case, what are the implications of this? This question of control and the at-best vague distinction of insider and outsider relates directly to the comparison with free jazz. As each musician embarks separately on his or her own journey into the possibilities of sound, the aural results arguably seem like a loss of focus – who is telling what musical story? In *Ascension*, Coltrane's solo was deliberately the same length as those of the other members of the band, refusing the conventional hierarchy of a music band and the leader. With this we return to the Adornian concept of parataxis. Morrison refuses to privilege any one of the narrative perspectives and thus demands a dialogue between them. The way Morrison does this is to create critical narrative junctures where the different voices meet.

Initially, as described, the chapters appear almost discrete, starting at a different moment in time and often introducing characters and events not yet known. However, the initial confusion is relieved as each chapter offers fragments that relate to episodes related in other chapters, establishing moments of unison around which the flurry of narrative sounds pivots. Putting the chapters together gradually fleshes out the history of Haven and the story of Ruby in a way that strongly resembles those moments of the collective ensemble in *Ascension* or of harmonic unison in *Free Jazz*, where aural textures are created by the collective contributions of the musicians. Each individual contribution would be effectively meaningless on its own and the logic of that moment exists solely through the group interaction. Similarly, without those moments anchoring each to the other, those narrative fragments would eventually spiral into narrative chaos (and it is crucial to realize that each depends on information provided in another to compose the coherent narrative).

By concentrating on examples of this, some of the key motifs of *Paradise* come into focus. Two of the more prominent instances of these meeting points are Arnette's first pregnancy and the story of Billie Delia and her relationship with her mother and with the Poole brothers.[29] In both examples, a precise description of the events is never given (i.e. as above, these too are absent tales) but the

repeated references and the dire implications of each event make these narrative moments all the more pertinent. Arnette's unwanted pregnancy and her unnatural destruction of it resonate with the many schisms that divide Ruby. The first allusion to the pregnancy is marked by Gigi's arrival into Ruby and is described in terms of the different, gendered, responses Arnette and K.D. have to both. While each accusingly demands the other take responsibility, the narrator reveals Arnette's inner sense of helplessness and K.D.'s disregard for his role in her pregnancy.

> They had just begun to veil threats and unveil mutual dislike when the bus pulled away. All heads, all, turned [. . .] The vision that appeared when the bus drove away, standing on the road shoulder between the schoolhouse and Holy Redeemer, riveted the attention of everybody lounging at the Oven [. . .]
>
> "If that's the kind of tramp you want, hop to it, nigger."
>
> K.D. looked from Arnette's neat shirtwaist dress to the bangs across her forehead and then into her face – sullen, nagging, accusatory – and slapped it. (54–5)

That their argument turns hostile and violent upon Gigi's arrival seals the distance between them as it anticipates a parallel relationship: K.D. becomes as irrationally fixated on Gigi as Arnette is on K.D., and both suffer cold-hearted disdain and eventually violent rejection in return. The gendered aspects of their simultaneous responses are highlighted by the arrested momentum in the narrative as their argument is interrupted. Arnette's jarring taunt demonstrates her immediate awareness of the threat posed by Gigi's arrival, while K.D.'s slow-motioned slap suggests a deliberation, making his attempts to reclaim any masculine authority that her demands on him may have diminished, all the more extreme.[30] A further consequence of the slap is to give shape to the growing tension between the Fleetwoods and the Morgans, a tension which disrupts the image of homogeny so privileged in the imagination of Ruby; the promise of its resolution in the pregnancy dissolves with the violence rejection.[31]

Arnette's gruesome efforts to kill her unborn child are never fully explained but clearly stem from a self-loathing that was sealed with K.D.'s slap and a 'revulsion so severe it cut mind from body and saw its flesh-producing flesh as foreign, rebellious, unnatural, diseased' (249). Her sinister reaction both results from and reflects the forces destroying Ruby which were marked by that slap, forces not put to rest despite the eventual wedding between K.D. and Arnette. Pervading the town and the marriage was an '[a]nimus that centered on the maybe-baby the bride had not acknowledged, announced or delivered' (144). The communal secret of Arnette's baby becomes disturbingly linked with two other macabre secrets kept in Ruby: the white family which dies in the blizzard and the murderous raid of the Convent, two events never reported to the authorities. These three events point to a growing unnaturalness and an

increasingly wilful blindness to the expanding disintegration of particular values in Ruby. That all three of these events take place in or near the Convent serves as a unifying dynamic that enables the community to identify an evil outsider and to displace all responsibility from inside. 'Nothing like other folks' sins for distraction' (159). Thus, they refuse to recognize their own responsibility and persist in a stubborn insistence on excluding the women of the Convent as outsiders, despite intimate interactions between virtually each one of the women with people of Ruby. (In addition to the provisions bought by the townsfolk from the Convent, Connie has an affair with Deek and becomes fast friends with Soane; Gigi and K.D. have a relationship; Seneca and Sweetie find each other on the path to the Convent; and Pallas is helped by Billie Delia and brought to the Convent.) Morrison's narrative criticizes this exclusivity and her novel suggests that it will eventually lead to destruction.

In addition to the interrupted and dispersed reporting of the events, there is a deliberate confusion of the chronology of events in the novel. Although set in real time in a particular socio-historical context, it is extraordinarily difficult at any point in the novel to pinpoint precisely in which year any event takes place. The time of each episode is determined with reference to another and only by means of a painstaking sifting of details can a chronology be determined. The novel's structuring of time, like the narrative structure, has a circular effect, directing the reader back and forth, but also imitates a psychologically realized narrator whose memories, traditions, experiences and anticipations all mingle into a present tense. Furthermore, by juxtaposing these different time signatures and creating a gyrating series of consecutive events Morrison offers a new dimension to the cultural treatment of time. Rather than this spiral chronology, Paul Gilroy depicts a different process of temporal/spatial readjustment undertaken by contemporary African-American aesthetics. Gilroy describes a growing motif undertaken by numerous African-American writers and jazz musicians who engage in futuristic and often outer-space discourse. 'The usurpation of the future by blacks involved them in struggles to throw off the shackles of the primitive and to win the right to address the future. This idiom did not come easily to political cultures dominated by the hermeneutics of memory' (2000: 337).[32] The utopian vision shared by these science-fictional works and the challenges they meet to achieve it is inherent to Morrison's novel but the difference between them is significant.

While the artists Gilroy discusses move outside or beyond history, Morrison determinedly anchors her visionary narrative to human experience. By disrupting the narrative flow, Morrison erodes the very possibility of a linear and determinate narrative. She refuses to provide the traditional comforts of hierarchically structured tale that ultimately privileges one voice and/or one version over all others as an accepted truth. Instead, Morrison concentrates on the links between versions, voices and moments in time, and both demands a recognition

of the inevitable politics which inform histories and seeks a new aesthetic response to these politics.

Group action: socializing music

In her focus on the relationship between the composite elements, Morrison's novel recalls Adorno's injunction to recognize the primariness of intra-elemental associations as a means of achieving the utopian *musique informelle*, described above. Adorno writes that, '*ce n'est pas le ton qui fait la musique.* Music is not simply an agglomeration of notes' (1961b: 299). He goes on to caution, however, that,

> Relations in their turn, as the incarnation of the subjective dimension, cannot be regarded as the primal material of music: there are no notes without relations, no relations without notes [. . .] The hypostatizing of relations would be the victim of exactly the same myth of origins as the reduction to the naked note, but in reverse. (301)

Adorno emphasizes the need for balance and warns against the ever-present dangers of hypostatization by and manipulations of the Culture Industry, dangers the implied listener is prey to as she seeks outside the musical piece for its meaning through allusion, reference and context. In order to avoid these, *musique informelle* concentrates on an introspective and self-perpetuating logic. Through the music's autonomy, its self-acknowledged refusal to engage in the mimetic project, paradoxically, it becomes much more immediately resonant of its aesthetic, social and political contexts. This envisioned aspect does not, however, preclude the presence and role of the listener. On the contrary, it is precisely through the listener that the music is rescued from the danger of solipsism, and this contextual relevance can be affirmed.

> The structure of musical objectivity *through* the subject and not *towards* the subject sets it off sharply from communication. [. . .] If communication, that is to say the intervention of art into the realm of the non-artistic, is desirable today, it would be necessary to fly in the face of communication and to flout its rules. (1961b: 320)

Again, invoking this paradox which characterizes the relation of art to society, Adorno turns communication on its head. Contemptuous of the potential listener who is imprisoned by mass culture, Adorno instead calls for a subjectivity that is infused into the moment of the music: 'It is the right of subjectivity to be present in the music itself, as the power of its immediate performance, instead

of being excluded from it once it has been launched' (320). Thus inscribed into the music itself, the listener effectively mediates between any event and its representation.

Adorno's aesthetic recognizes the potential violence of representation (in particular – though not solely – he refers to the effect of the Holocaust on aesthetics), but it is precisely this that demands a recognition of art's limitations. As Cohen writes, the reader is implicated in the 'very violence she would protest against [. . .] For Adorno, the inescapability of representation's violence demands precisely the recognition of its limits, of the danger of seeking adequation between the event and its representation' (Cohen, 50). Far from escaping the social and historical contexts, through its own self-conscious boundaries and by means of the reader/listener, the aesthetic expression is thus intimately linked with that which lies beyond it.

This structure is no less important in free jazz or in Morrison's *Paradise* than it is in Adorno's *musique informelle*. With free jazz, if the listener does surrender to the impulses of the music, she risks being utterly alienated by an aesthetic that tends to defy preconceived structural rules rather than follow them. It is only through the implicit effort of the music to communicate and the willingness of the listener to engage with that communication that the spontaneous community can emerge. Already implicit in the paratactical construction of a non-hierarchical relationship of elements described above, the focus turns to the productive energy that ties the elements together.[33]

For Morrison every element is fundamentally reducible to a network of links and is (here and elsewhere) conceived of in terms of siblings. Writing about two non-fictional accounts that became the bases for *Beloved* and *Jazz*, Morrison describes one way in which she reflects this process in her writing:

> I had about fifteen or twenty questions that occurred to me with those two stories in terms of what it is that really compels a good woman to displace the self, her self. So what I started doing and thinking about [. . .] was to project the self not in the way we say "yourself," but to a space between those words, as though the self were really a *twin* or a thirst or a friend or something that sits right next to you and watches you. (Marks, 2002: 15)

Not unlike the process of *musique informelle*, which strives to collapse, or transcend, the distance between subject and object, Morrison describes the process of self-conception not as external objectification, but as a protracted perspective that focuses, instead, on the *relation* between the subject and object. In *Paradise*, she elaborates on the nature of this relation through the repeated theme of brotherhood. (Particularly striking is the unusually high number of twins in the novel.) Signifying on an African-American linguistic trope which conceives of all African Americans as *brothers* or *sisters* (a usage adopted primarily during the Civil Rights movement for political purposes), and in light of

the passage quoted, the presence and relationships between the various siblings in *Paradise* takes on unique significance.

Deek and Steward Morgan are identical twins but become increasingly dissimilar as the narrative progresses. Repeatedly described in terms of their identity, the difference between them is initially collapsed; they even share memories and thoughts. As they become increasingly estranged, reflecting the growing animosity in Ruby, Morrison implicitly suggests that it is precisely that initial refusal to acknowledge difference, or, finally, to accept it when they see it, that establishes the totalizing objectification of the community. Morrison suggests that the displaced self is one who cannot recognize the *other* inherent in her. Moreover, a community which sees its members only as *others* – or, indeed, as in *Paradise*, as only the same – will be irreparably fragmented. Instead, the narrative urges for a shift of focus from the objectified *other* or the subjected self to the fraternal, communal and intra-personal relation that links the social and individuated elements.

Alternately, Jill Matus explains the proliferation of twins as an image of and critical emphasis on historical duplication:

> *Paradise* pushes towards the realisation [sic] that collective memory and tradition must continually adapt and respond to the present if they are to avail change and help to make a desired future. It is not a question of revising or rewriting history, but of seeing new significance in traditional accounts and artefacts. (161)

The failure of the people of Ruby to adapt their history to the present is echoed in the narrative voice of Rev. Misner who comments that it is '[a]s though, rather than children, they wanted duplicates' (161). Matus focuses on duplication and repetition, embodied by the large cast of twins in the novel, as the means by which Morrison disengages herself from a totalizing force of history and engages with the more dynamic forms of tradition, oral accounts and artefacts (in the Adornian sense of paradoxically more organic through its own artifice). Similarly, Paul Gilroy describes the 'celebrants and critics of [black vernacular] cultures [who] have had to consider the power of meaningful sound before they could move toward the different and perhaps less demanding tasks involved in analyzing the visualization of the extraterrestrial and futuristic in racialized forms' (2000: 342).[34] Gilroy and Morrison force their readers to face the past in the present in a way that implicates us but moves us forward.

By incorporating the impossible utopian vision into the aesthetic, a new notion of totality emerges: a totality that includes both its own processes and its opposition. This Adornian structure reveals yet another paradox of the novel: it effectively achieves the impossible. The narrative moves towards its impossible resolution: the creation of a new way of life, a new conception and aesthetic

of race. However, these goals are violently arrested in the opening page of the narrative with the death of the white woman. Nevertheless, the novel moves both backwards and forward from that narrative moment to embody that loss and, much like the examples of absence described in this chapter, the very fact of absence establishes a presence, in this way paradoxically manifesting the very utopia which had escaped. Significantly, Gilroy's vision of a postracial planetary humanism is central to this temporal and logical distortion. By emphasizing the productive collectivity through a political, linguistic and finally aesthetic project, Morrison effectively displaces identity-making processes, directing the notions of race and ethnicity into a creative and positive force that can function within a postracial conceptualization of contemporary times.

Conclusion

Ishmael Reed, Toni Morrison, Gayl Jones, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin present a chorus of artists riffing and harmonizing on the shifting conceptions of ethnic identity, across the twentieth century. The trajectories of blues and jazz likewise reflect a series of improvisations on the same motifs. In their own aesthetic investigations, these writers expose the crucial connections between these projects, intertwining the language, structures and context of text with those of music. By examining the highly varied manifestations of a jazz aesthetic as the fundamental common denominator linking these writers, I have sought to expose an underlying unifying principle. As the different authors write against essentializing or organic categories of race, the very fact of a shared engagement with jazz sensibilities in their work redefines the bases of African-American communal identity.

As is clear, I have not attempted to present an exclusive or comprehensive interpretation of African-American jazz literary sensibilities. Rather, through my own emphasis on variety, flexibility and dynamic creativity, I have hoped to reject the very possibility of hypostatizing and stultifying critical categorization. It is through an emphasis on difference that positive constructions of communal and individual identities can emerge, eluding the potent dangers of racializing thought and activities. One way in which these possibilities are made clear is through Morrison's own diverse narrative focus. In what initially appears to be a surprising move back in time (following the gradual move into a contemporary moment across her oeuvre), in her latest novel, *Love* (2003), Morrison simultaneously offers a culmination, a reversion and perhaps even a resolution to the dilemmas posed in her earlier texts. As a conclusion to *Cross-Rhythms*, I would like to concentrate on a new beat pulsing through contemporary aesthetics and politics, one that drives *Love* and revises love, as it drums the rhythms of soul-jazz. Soul-jazz, also called *funk*, or even 'funkgroovesoul,' developing alongside free jazz in the late 1950s-early 1960s, was, Scott Saul describes, a 'new, emphatically black, and vernacular aesthetic' (2003: 83). This was a music emerging from hard-bop that signals a return to roots, to bodies – *funk* in all its denotations and connotations points directly to physicality, and to soul – locating its origins in the black church. While free jazz called for willing and committed listeners, inevitably paring down the audience to a relatively

exclusive few, soul-jazz revitalized the connection between jazz and popular music (83, 164).

Morrison's *Love* invokes a return to the funk, the body as it stands naked, stripped of its politics and honest with its claims: prepubescent bodies, brittle ageing bodies, bodies tied up or held down, drowned and bloated, or brazen and demanding, startlingly beautiful and proud, or pathetically broken and distorted. But this is not a simple thing. Morrison shows how bodies can betray, deceive, mislead, corrupt and ultimately destroy, as, indeed, the very history of racism depicts the perverted fetishization of the body. Although far from exclusive or self-contained, we could draft the following chronology: where *Corregidora* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (and *Beloved*, for that matter) exposed the scars of race on the psyche, on the body, on the family; and *Jazz, Juneteenth* and *Invisible Man*, reveal the remnants of these scars in fragmented dissonant selves; *Mumbo Jumbo* and *Song of Solomon* disclose and rewrite the systems of il-logic that produce and perpetuate racism; and *Paradise* bares the mechanics of race in language and in community. *Love* delves deeper into the heart of racism – and of humanness: love and hate which, she shows us, are the same. The novel asks how to love without consuming, how to celebrate the body without destroying it, how to be fully human, responsible for evil and capable of beauty, and crucially – how to recognize guilt and culpability, striving not for justice and retribution but for peace and companionship.

To do this, Morrison brings us back to the landscape of Paradise in a narrative land full of apples, snakes and souls lost, seductive, and cloven-hoofed. However, instead of the strictures and structures exposed and transcended, located in *Paradise*, here we have the move to *Love* – a process, an interaction, and, ultimately, a narrating voice, offering an alternative to the volatile sonic explosion of the early sixties with the mellifluously engaging soul-jazz. The transition fills the emptied centre of the paratactical process, demonstrated as critical for *Paradise* and free jazz, with a newly individuated hierarchy. Love is imbued with narratorial authority as it is embodied by two women watching beyond the grave, serving as witness and narrator. Having strikingly eliminated evidence of inherited (musical as well as racial) tradition in *Paradise*, Morrison refocuses on the possibilities of a more tuneful thematic presence that explores the extreme variations on human interaction. The underlying musical current that courses through Morrison's novels offers a reflection as well as a catalyst for the processes of ethnic identification. Through her persistent complication of historical, racial, linguistic and musical models, the *Love* that emerges from *Paradise* demonstrates a positive reclamation of the past and a creative move into what can be considered a *free soul jazz*.

All of these writers, as well as the countless I have not included or dwelled on at any length (Sterling Brown, Xam Wilson Cartiér, W. E. B. DuBois, Michael Harper, James McBride, Nathaniel Mackey, Clarence Major, ZZ Packer, Sister Souljah, Sherley Anne Williams and Al Young, to name a few), their engagement

with a jazz aesthetic and their creative literary output significantly transform ethnic identity-making processes. Having served as the basis for some of the most violent and horrific episodes in history, the processes are rewritten through these texts, altered from binding categories into transcendent possibilities of social behaviour, individual realization and collective and personal creative expression. We are at a moment when the racial paradigms of the United States, with all their dangers and absurdities, are shifting but no less crucial: in mid 2006, African Americans were incarcerated at nearly five to seven times the rate of whites (*BJS*) and yet since 2005, African Americans over the age of 25 are more likely than their white counterparts to have a high school diploma (*AAY*); while Barack Obama leads a powerful campaign for the Democratic Presidential candidacy, on one hand, he is dogged and defined by racial politics of his spiritual leader, on the other; it is the African-American Herbie Hancock's jazz tribute to the white folklorist Joni Mitchell that is awarded the 2007 Grammy for best album. Thus, as the beats of jazz drum on, they overlap, intersect and cross through the ever-vibrant pulses of texts such as these explored here, posing new patterns for the rhythms of race as they pace the American heartbeat.

Notes

Introduction

[1] In this book, for practical reasons, I shall refer to classic blues as a subset of a broader jazz aesthetic. That there is a clear link between blues and jazz has been widely accepted in musical scholarship, though the precise nature of this relationship has been endlessly debated. Although I shall define both terms more specifically below, hereafter, unless otherwise stated, the term *jazz* includes the blues as well.

[2] That the roles of many of these white musicians or businessmen have often been manipulative or exploitative does not preclude the effect they had on the trends in jazz. Moreover, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the white presence in the jazz world has been exclusively negative: the diverse roles played by figures such as Bix Beiderbecke, Carl van Vechten, Benny Goodman, Bill Evans, George Avakian and Charlie Haden, to name a few, have made irrefutably productive contributions to jazz culture. The list of white-American authors whose work has been informed by jazz sensibilities is long and varied, ranging from the high-modernist poetry of T. S. Eliot in the early 1900s, through the avant-garde experimentalism of the Beat writers in mid-century, to the postmodernism of Donald Barthelme or absurd-naturalism of Rafi Zabor in 1998. For more on race in jazz and in jazz literature, see Townsend (2000: 115–23). Finally, the role of jazz in the fabric of American culture moves far beyond the dichotomy of black and white. Ann Petry's *The Street*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* and Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* are only three of countless examples where a jazz aesthetic has been used to explore identities other and additional to black or white.

[3] On this, see for example, Horsman (1981).

[4] For more on jazz historiography, see, for example, DeVeaux (1991: 525–60) and Gennari (1998: 226–34). Furthermore, L. Jones (1963) Shipton (2001) and Tirro (1977) are three very different attempts to write comprehensive narratives. Krin Gabbard (1995), O'Meally (1998), Townsend (2000), Tucker (2000) and numerous jazz biographies are examples which offer alternative and more focused or diverse jazz histories and attempt to address earlier omissions in the jazz narrative.

[5] Central elements preserved from African musical traditions were: the centrality of the rhythm and the drums, pattern of call and response, antiphonal singing

technique, the importance of lyrics and the vocal interpretation, and the dependence on music as a functional tool of communication. (L. Jones, 1963: 26–8).

6 One response in the 1930s to this popularized and commercially successful form of African-American music was an attempt to reclaim the music for a racialized self with the return to the exclusivity of a blues subculture and the development of rhythm & blues(R&B). Ironically, the development of R&B was manipulated by record companies, much as the so-called 'race records' of the 1920s had been, again illustrating the fusion between the demands of the market and individuality of expression.

7 For an overview of Adorno, his life, works and ideas, see Paddison (1996).

8 While he does discuss the music elsewhere, it is in these that the music is his central focus: Adorno (1933), (1936), (1938), (1941), (1946), (1953).

9 Numerous critics have critiqued Adorno's jazz critiques, varying from the furious to disappointed sympathy. Others have offered convincing readings which seek to redeem some of Adorno's more problematic arguments; see for example: Béthune (2003), Harding (1995), Hegarty (2007), Kodat (2003), Robinson (1994) and Witkin (1998).

10 John Coltrane's 'My Favorite Things' is an example where the numerous repetitions and the reconfiguration of familiar jazz structures create a new musical experience with a complex relation to these musical references, one which would be impossible without these structures.

11 For Adorno's discussion on the implications of the banal in art, see Adorno (1938). Also, see Witkin (1998: 57–60, 103–5, 114–5).

12. See for example, Gates (1988), Baker (1988) and Morrison (1992b).

13 Significantly, Baldwin's configuration of this process as a theology carries with it central ontological and moral implications: ethnic identity is not simply a social phenomenon or even a biological fact; it is an encompassing system of belief which purports to contain the divine mystery.

14 See '"A tamed richness": jazz as myth' (Townsend, 2000: 160–85) for a discussion on the mythologization of jazz.

15 Kun's reference to Adorno is taken from: Adorno (1955: 19).

16 Davis Yaffe offers fresh insight into the role of jazz in Ellison's aesthetic and his own vital role in jazz historiography (2006: 65–98).

17 As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, recording technology did not annul this ephemerality: it only redefined it.

18 See, for example, Baker (1988), Gates (1988), Gilroy (1993), Gilroy (2000), Gussow (2002), O'Meally (1998), Porter (2001), Townsend (2000), Tracy (2001), Gabbard (1995), Rice (2000), Rice (1994a, 1994b) and Tally (2001).

19 See, for example, Werner (1994) for a modernist analysis of Langston Hughes and T.S. Eliot and Miner (1985) and Moses (1999) for a reading of *The Bluest Eye* as a blues text.

Chapter 1

1 For more on this see, for example, Levine (1977) and Hamilton (2007).

2 Liner notes. *The Blues Volume 5*, The Original Chess Masters, CHD-9320, 1990.

³ For an extended analysis of the relation between the human, the historical and the musical in Adorno's writing, see Subotnik (1977).

⁴ Rose Subotnik offers a complex post-Kantian reading of Adorno whereby she convincingly suggests that this meaning that ensures the human – and the humane – within these processes is mediated through Reason.

⁵ See for example, Baker (1984), Batker (1998), Gussow (2002) and Johnson (1998).

⁶ For an illuminating analysis of the novel's blues structures, see Allen (2002).

⁷ In the references to Caesar and the Pyramids, Hughes does something different: drawing typological parallels between the experience of slavery throughout history, on one hand, and, on the other, likening the financial greed of the slave-traders, slave owners, and the powerful white community in twentieth century America, to the greed for land or the greed for power/status in the Roman and Egyptian Empires, respectively.

⁸ For example, both Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston were, at some point, under the patronage of Mrs Mason. Carl van Vechten was another white patron of black arts during the Harlem Renaissance.

⁹ Hughes himself commented on the financial motivations and necessities of creating art. As Steven C. Tracy paraphrases: 'man does not live by art alone, especially an art that doesn't growl with the hungry bellies of the dispossessed or eagle rock to the tune of those weary blues' (8). See also (Tracy 143) and Hughes (1940).

¹⁰ In defence of the density (near inaccessibility at times) of Adorno's music criticism, Rose Subotnik argues that

> Criticism that clearly separates musical and conceptual discussions tends to emphasize the limitations of human temporality [. . .] but a close enough interpenetration of music and concept might overcome the limitation and provide a model, through the manner of its own internal integration, for reconstructing a universe of meaning in which the connections between the musical and extramusical (or individual and nonindividual) values of a postreligious world were all simultaneously and actually present, and not merely evoked by means of their absence. Adorno's musical writings seem to be guided by some such critical model as this. (1977: 52)

The externality of the critic (here, both Adorno and Hughes) is not separate from the object of critique but inextricable from and complementary to it.

¹¹ Michael Taft (2006) offers a meticulously investigated study of the *formula* as a defining structural unit of blues lyrics.

¹² Subotnik elaborates on the implications of this principle of developing variation in Beethoven's second-period sonata movements which 'seem to constitute genuine dialectical totalities, according to Adorno, reconciling force and counterforce, part and whole, self and other, freedom and order' (1976: 21).

¹³ Adam Gussow (2002) offers an insightful reading of Janie's relationship with Tea Cake as her initiation and ultimate transformation into a blueswoman.

¹⁴ Baker relates this formulation of 'X' as trace, linked to the body as host, to Mark Taylor's 'The Text as Victim', in *Deconstruction and Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp. 58–78, who configures this parasitic relationship as related *para-sites*.

¹⁵ This trope of atopicality bleeds into *utopicality* in popular African-American musical and cultural imagination. Placelessness is transported to an image of utopia

which is used to sustain ideological, personal and aesthetic sanity during the inhumanity of slavery and its aftermath. As will be seen in later chapters, *utopia* figures strongly in more contemporary African-American aestheses.

16 Gates uses a graphological differentiation to emphasize a clear distinction between the uses and meanings of *signification* in Standard English, and those of 'Signifyin(g)' in the black vernacular tradition. For details on the relationship of signifying and Signifyin(g), see Chapter 2: 'The Signifying Monkey and the Language of Signifyin(g): Rhetorical Difference and the Orders of Meaning' (Gates, 1988: 44–88).

17 I will hereafter forego further use of Gates's visual distinction. While the value of such a differentiation is of primary relevance for my purposes here, having signalled this distinction, I feel its visual and semantic ungainliness warrants a recourse to standard English.

18 Taken from Roger D. Abrahams, 'The Changing Concept of the Negro Hero', in *The Golden Log*, edited by Mody C Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson and Allen Maxwell (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1962), pp. 119–34; p. 125.

19 Here Gates refers to the work of Anthony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse* (New York: Methuen, 1983), pp. 89–30, 93. An example of this function of rhyme can be seen in the following: 'And the Lion knew that he didn't play the Dozens/and he knew the Elephant wasn't none of his cousins,/so he went through the jungle with a mighty roar, / poppin' his tail like a forty-four,/knockin' giraffes to their knees/ and knockin' coconuts from the trees' (Gates, 1988: 60); as taken from Roger D. Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1970), p. 164.

20 For more on this see Subotnik, 'Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style'.

21 The story is retold a number of times in Gates (1988). Two examples can be found in pages 55–7, 62. Another example is in the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr et al. (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 42–4.

22 This disparity was not a hypostatized gap in meaning but was always in the process of becoming; the constant displacement of the sign in different contexts and through its repeated rearticulation, its relation to the signified was always in flux.

23 This model was contrasted by a burgeoning middle class which socially frowned upon this liberation in ways that often imitated white racial rhetoric. Carol Batker considers the perceived dichotomy between Blues Women and Club Women, particularly in the ways which Hurston's *Their Eyes* disrupts it.

24 Paul Oliver writes about the necessary obliqueness of social critique in the blues in his 1968 *Screening the Blues*. Adam Gussow, on the other hand, offers a potent reading of Mamie Smith's 'Crazy Blues' as social text (2002: 159–94).

Chapter 2

1 Sections of this chapter have been previously published in somewhat different form, as (King and Scott, 2006: 11–35); reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

² This marks the moment when jazz divides into different streams, each serving different social and aesthetic functions: from art to entertainment.

³ This view cannot be associated with all of bebop as Charlie Parker, for example, was steeped in the blues. As DeVeaux comments, however, 'the blues of Charlie Parker could not be mistaken for the blues of Bessie Smith or Charley Patton' (1997: 62). In other words, even when the blues informed the bop musicians the form was altered dramatically.

⁴ See DeVeaux (1997: 269) and Shipton (2001: 455) for more on beboppers's relation to blues.

⁵ For example, 'Parker's Mood', 'The Chase' and 'Scrapple From the Apple'.

⁶ We can begin to see how these elements of bebop function textually in A. Timothy Spaulding's illuminating analysis of Invisible Man:

> Ellison incorporates narrative techniques rooted in the specific art of the bebop impro-
> viser more than in a general or modernist aesthetic. Through the narrator, Ellison uses
> concepts such as quoting (the interpolation of one song or melody into another), har-
> monic variation (redefining and extending the "traditional" notes associated with a
> scale) and asymmetrical phrasing (juxtaposing familiar notes with unfamiliar notes to
> produce ambiguity). Although what results is a highly ordered and composed literary
> work, there are key narrative moments in which Ellison, through the narrator, infuses
> the text with stylistic and improvisational chaos or dissonance. In these moments, the
> narrator draws upon the traditional materials and voices of his cultural past in order to
> improvise on "the melodic theme" of invisibility. What results is a narrative that is, at
> once, innovative and rooted in tradition. (2004: 491)

⁷ Importantly, one of the staple features of bebop – 'rhythm changes' – denotes an improvisation on the chord sequence of Gershwin's 'I Got Rhythm,' a structure that served to define a majority of bebop. See (DeVeaux, 1997: 203, 326, 328, 421) for details on how this was used.

⁸ Barth contends that despite the necessary and inevitable 'sectors of articulation', there are still sufficiently insulated and isolated unique ethnic characteristics which are recognizable (or agreed upon) and incontrovertible in any given poly-ethnic society. Barth, thus, does not leave space for choice in his model. Barth's theory presupposes more or less homogenous ethnic monoliths which are, at most, only behaviourally and apparently – rather than actually – interdependent with another such monolith. While the study of ethnic groups certainly benefits from a focus on where and how boundaries separating them are drawn, Barth's theory fails to explain adequately the history of ethnicity in the United States (to name one example) and the implications of miscegenation, mixed marriages and intimate inner-city cohabitation. This omission notwithstanding, his perspec-tive offers a fruitful understanding of ethnic boundaries and is thus useful for my consideration of bebop and ethnic identity in these texts.

⁹ For three dramatically different treatments of passing as a central trope that revolve around this moment or possibility of discovery, see for example Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* and *Passing*, Philip Roth, *The Human Stain* and Jackie Kay, *Trumpet*.

¹⁰ Subotnik goes on to demonstrate how the very structure of Adorno's critique reflects the nature of his criticism and complements the subject being critiqued.

[11] One example of this is elicited in Ellison's article, 'On Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazz', where he describes the 'grim comedy of racial manners: with the musicians employing a calculated surliness and rudeness' (Ellison, 1964: 225).

[12] Suggesting that passing functions in bebop becomes complicated. As we know, passing suggests a perfect blending into the cultural space of an *other*. Clearly bebop does not do this as it stridently proclaims its own difference. However, as clear from the discussion of Charlie Parker's nickname, for example, the emphasis on irony, shared knowledge and musical complexities underlying an exterior façade of facile musical structures (as in the many bebop versions of popular tunes), create an effect of parodic mimesis and reflective distortion which draws useful parallels between passing and bebop.

[13] Any discussion about Ellison's *Juneteenth* must be qualified by the facts of its publication. The novel was written over a period of 40 years and at the time of Ellison's death was scattered in an array of notes with an extensive but as yet loose structure. These have been collated, organized and published posthumously by the Ellison's literary executor, John F. Callahan.

[14] Though examples to the contrary do exist, these examples serve to further prove the point that – not unlike the history of minstrelsy – the motivation of white Americans passing for black was generally to tap into a culture of authenticity otherwise unavailable to them.

[15] Consider, for example, the tests put to Zora Neale Hurston as she travelled through the South before she was accepted as an insider in the black communities. A second example of this perceived inauthenticity can be seen in the narrator of James Baldwin's 'Sonny's Blues' (1957): because he has become gentrified he is not able to relate to the music in the same way that Sonny does and so he is an outsider from the world Sonny lives in. Significantly, in the last scene, it is through bebop that a link is established between the brothers.

[16] Barry Shank's 'Bliss, or Blackface Sentiment' (2003) offers a sophisticated and insightful reading of *Juneteenth* not as an exploration of passing, but as a dramatic and powerful reconsideration of masks and blackface as foundational to American culture.

[17] This model is, of course, not a straightforward one: it can be (and has been) claimed that identity politics are the luxury of the hegemony. Consider, for example, bell hooks's comment that 'Yeah, it's easy to give up identity, when you got one' (1990: 28). And yet, considering how the authors I am examining have chosen to depict and explore race and ethnic identity (significantly through jazz aesthetics) aesthetically constructs a space for the discourse of choice.

[18] For a rich and diverse comparison of Baldwin and Morrison, see King and Scott (2006).

[19] Arguably, the blues was associated with a vernacular culture rejected by many middle-class African Americans. However, it was often rejected precisely because it stood for such a significant part of black American history.

[20] This description of a steady beat characteristically underlying bebop is not meant to overlook the new complexities of bebop's rhythmic backdrop, already described. Despite explorations into polyrhythms, the majority of bop (particularly in its earlier stages) is characterized by a sustained driving rhythm.

21 This passage also alludes to a repeated link between music and motion: Joe follows a trail into the music of the city. I will elaborate on the implications of this link and its relation to *Another Country*, below.

22 The role of a Marxist discourse in this context is not arbitrary. Not only is it consistent with the Adornian framework on which the analysis is built, but the historical moment of bebop in the 1940s saw a growing membership of African Americans with the Communist Party, which was seen by some as a movement that transcended racial boundaries. Furthermore, in the 1940s there was an important shift from post-World War II political sentiments to the fierce anti-Communism of the Cold War, a shift that had a huge impact on American societies, reconfiguring the process of cultural *othering* so prominent in American history.

23 The radical political and social possibilities offered by jazz have been recognized by musicians as well as by communal leaders who have proclaimed African-American ethnicity to be the sole (or authentic) progenitor of jazz, a music sometimes claimed to be properly understood only by the African-American community.

24 For an extended bebop analysis of this scene, in relation to Adorno's writing on jazz, see James M. Harding's illuminating 'Adorno, Ellison, and the Critique of Jazz' (1995).

25 For more on *Jazz* and the city, see Paquet-Deyris (2001) and Balshaw (2000).

26 As I will discuss in my conclusion, Morrison returns to this emphasis in her latest novel, *Love*.

27 I will discuss the manifestation of these implications in Morrison's later novel, *Paradise*, and its relation to free jazz, below.

28 Horace Porter offers critical analysis of the manifestations and implications of these narrative solos (2001: 77–88).

29 In *The Story of Jazz: Toni Morrison's Dialogic Imagination* (2001), Justine Tally explores the significance of storytelling in *Jazz* and suggests that it is part of a healing process which will enable African-American collective imagination (social, political as well as creative) to move beyond the trauma of African-American historical experience.

Chapter 3

1 See, for example, Kahn (2002) and Nisenson (2000) on the making of Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, and Davis's *Kind of Blue*, respectively. Also, *Miles, Ornette, Cecil* by Mandel (2008) which seeks to identify the avant-garde.

2 While *mode* and *scale* are not precisely synonymous, I am using them interchangeably as the connotative distinction between them does bear on my analysis. Specifically, a *scale* tends to suggest a harmonic structure built on triads, intervals of a third: e.g. major, minor, diminished or augmented scales. *Mode*, in contrast, tends to imply different intervallic patterns (often seconds and fourths). Either way, both terms denote a system of interval relationships.

3 With the label *avant-garde*, I am referring to the period of dramatic musical innovations, beginning with the late 1950s. In particular, I use this to identify

the political and cultural moment in which modal jazz emerged (though, as described in the beginning of this chapter, this cannot be entirely divorced from free jazz).

⁴ For a detailed description of modality in *Kind of Blue*, see Jost (1974)(21–3), and Tirro (1977: 354–64).

⁵ 'The simple rule is that no note may be repeated before all 12 notes of the row have been played and that note's turn has come round again in another presentation of the row. The basic postulates of the twelve-note system, as given by Rufer (J. Rufer 1961: 84): (1) A twelve-note series consists of all twelve notes of the chromatic scale arranged in a specific order. (2) No note is repeated within the series. (3) Each series can be used in four forms: the original form, its inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion. (4) The series or segments of the series can be stated horizontally or vertically. (5) Each of the four forms may be transposed to begin on any note of the chromatic scale. (6) It is usual (conventional) that only one series should be used in a work' Witkin (1998: 135).

⁶ For more on *technique*, see for example: Adorno, 'Inherent tendency of musical material' (1958: 32–7).

⁷ See Witkin (1998: 135–6) and Subotnik (1991: 77, 208–9, 217) for further details on the socio-musical implications of twelve-tone technique.

⁸ Adorno's conception of social functionality is paradoxical in that for him 'All efforts to restore art by giving it a social function [. . .] are doomed' while at the same time 'The truth content of artworks [. . .] is historical right into its innermost cell' (1970: 1, 191). For Adorno, this functionality is not so much an active social agency, but rather the fundamental possibility of this active engagement.

⁹ This passage has been widely and powerfully analysed. Two examples which explicitly concentrate on this passage are: Debra Werrlein and Phyllis Klotman. Clarissa Sligh's *Reading Dick & Jane With Me* offers a parallel subversive reading to the primer, similarly illustrating the deep-seated politics of the innocuous looking Dick and Jane primer. I am indebted to Sonia Weiner for this wonderful reference.

¹⁰ Rice (1994a: 429–30). Rice's article has been fiercely criticized for inaccuracies and oversights. These notwithstanding, Rice's approach reveals the radical centrality of jazz in Morrison's writing, and moreover, exemplifies a method of jazz analysis.

¹¹ The same can be said with regard to the harmonic structure of the music as the tension between the underlying chordal progression and the overlaid modal improvisation is in constant flux.

¹² Gates writes that whereas 'Ellison tropes the myth of presence in Wright's title of *Native Son* and *Black Boy* through his title of *Invisible Man*, Reed parodies all three titles by employing as his title the English-language parody of black language itself' (1988: 221). I will discuss this idea of language as being the central focus, below.

¹³ For more on the jazz implications of Reed's title see, Omry (2007).

¹⁴ In an unrelated but strikingly relevant analysis of *Song of Solomon*, Valerie Smith too writes about the emerging horizontality (which she contrasts with linearity) of consciousness. For example, for her, a horizontal vision is an inclusive perspective that ensures a communal continuity rather than the exclusive and blinkered linearity of Macon Dead's vision at the beginning of the novel (280–2).

15 Gates describes the original cover as follows: 'On the book's cover [. . .] repeated and reversed images of a crouching, sensuous Josephine Baker are superimposed upon a rose. Counterposed to this image is a medallion depicting a horse with two riders. These signs – the rose and the medallion – adumbrate the two central oppositions of the novel's complicated plot' (1988: 221).

16 See Gates (1988: 227–32) for an elaborate reading of Mumbo Jumbo as a detective novel.

Chapter 4

1 Nevertheless, studies such as the infamous *The Bell Curve* (1994) continue to emerge, incurring heated debates. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, was a landmark study that adopts a transnational racialized perspective and constructs the notion of a black trans-Atlantic diaspora that erodes as it transcends national boundaries.

2 As will be shown below, the relevance of this pattern, 'turning a utility to a shrine', for *Paradise* is paramount.

3 These were neither the first nor the only explorations of the freer jazz medium taking place at the same time. Cecil Taylor, Steve Lacy (on saxophone), even early Coleman, already explore some ideas of free jazz. This notwithstanding, these two albums offer two primary examples of the free-jazz aesthetic that underlines much of the music that falls under this category before and after.

4 Recording personnel on *Free Jazz* are as follows: Ornette Coleman (alto saxophone), Eric Dolphy (bass clarinet), Donald Cherry (pocket trumpet), Freddie Hubbard (trumpet), Scott LaFaro (bass), Charlie Haden (bass), Billy Higgins (drums), Ed Blackwell (drums).

5 Ekkehard Jost offers a wonderful analysis of the similarities and differences between the two recordings (87–96).

6 I would like to emphasize again that while it is not my suggestion that free jazz is a manifestation of *musique informelle*, I do believe that Adorno's work can be applied very fruitfully to jazz and lead to very illuminating understandings of the development of avant-garde jazz and the emergence of free jazz.

7 See, for example, L. Jones (1964: 55).

8 This paradox reflects the many paradoxical formulations Adorno considers in *Philosophy of Modern Music*. By becoming even more artificial (i.e. by not pretending to mimic nature – which it can never be) the music ironically becomes even more natural – because it becomes an organic and self-contained expression:

> Since the work [of art], after all, cannot be reality, the elimination of all illusory features accentuates all the more glaringly the illusory character of its existence [. . .] the process of dissolution – ordained by the meaning of the totality – makes the totality meaningless. The integral work of art is that work which is absolutely paradoxical. (1961b: 70–1)

9 In other contexts, Morrison, herself, is critical of the utopian vision as a political tool that stultifies action as it stimulates vision. Her use of a utopian construct

in this novel offers an alternative role for a utopian idea. For her comments on the dangers of envisioning an impossible future, see Morrison, 'Home'.

[10] In *Interrupting Auschwitz* (2003), his study of the implications of the Holocaust for aesthetic production, Josh Cohen describes another example where any traditional language of history or narrative aesthetic becomes inadequate and must be transformed in order to comprehend, transcend and prevent the recurrence of a traumatic historical moment. While the vast differences between the forces culminating in the Holocaust and those leading to slavery and its aftermath of racism resist any easy conflation of the two histories, the scale of the horror of each enables a natural comparison.

Cohen writes about the Adornian 'categorical imperative' to find a new aesthetic (by which he means both artistic production and ways of 'arranging thoughts and actions') which will prevent any repetition of the horrors of Auschwitz; and he describes Adorno's response to this demand as

> a refusal to bring thought or action to completion or consummation. Indeed, this refusal is intrinsic to the structure of the imperative itself; history can judge the imperative violated [. . .] but the judgement of its fulfilment belongs of necessity to an unachieved and unachievable future. Thus, if Adorno points to a redemptive horizon at the point of which "nothing similar will happen", this horizon is always already intricated with the impossibility of its actualization. The redemptive is, paradoxically, indissociable from this impossibility'. (4)

It is instructive to consider Cohen's treatment of two Paul Celan poems in light of this categorical imperative and its essential incompleteness of the Absolute. Cohen's readings reveal an aesthetic response to trauma which is in many ways paralleled in the project Toni Morrison undertakes in *Paradise*.

[11] Consider, for example, John Coltrane's response to the recurring criticism that he played angry music: 'I don't really know what a listener feels when he hears music. The musician may feel one way and the listener may get something else from the music [. . .] The beauty of jazz is that you're free to do just what you feel.' Coltrane recognizes the potential disparity between the performer's and the audience's experience of music but acknowledges the importance of both. Kitty Grime, 'John Coltrane Talks to *Jazz News*', *Jazz News*, 27 December , 1961; As cited in Porter (1999: 195).

[12] Jill Matus offers another important interpretation of 'Ruby', quoting from *Proverbs* XXXI.10: 'Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies', a proverb which resonates in the minds of the townsfolk (Matus, 1998: 157–8).

[13] See also, Baillie (2002). Here Baillie describes Morrison's pragmatic utopianism in terms of language, as it functions in *Paradise*.

[14] See also (232–49, 265).

[15] It is worth noting that this heightened interest in spirituality was not reserved for musicians but was also apparent in wider circles of American culture, at this time. Nevertheless, the manifestation of the spiritual journeys in the musical material offers an added dimension to the understanding of each.

[16] There is no single, universally accepted Gnostic myth of creation but most of the versions do revolve around a core of common elements and characters.

17 'Secret Book According to John', 7.1–10 tells of the creation of the Word as one of the divine coactors of Barbēlo (Layton, 33). This does not contradict the point being made here. The divine Word is one of unity, rather than of distinction, the latter being the defining characteristic of the language of Ialdabaōth.

18 'In Gnostic myth the role of "afterthought" – also known as "life" (Zōē), the female instructing principle, and the holy spirit – is to assist both Adam and all humankind, in order to recollect the power stolen by Ialdabaōth [. . .] and now dispersed in the Gnostic race' (Layton, 77).

19 For example, in a passage which attempts to describe Billy's complicated ancestry, Pat reveals that he belongs to the Cato lineage from both his mother's and his father's side (196).

20 In *Between Camps*, Paul Gilroy writes about the work of poet and scholar Elizabeth Alexander to describe this notion of a 'text carried in the flesh' which is 'composed of "ancestral" memories of terror' and points to its literary embodiment in Morrison's *Beloved*, with the chokeberry tree inscribed on Sethe's back. Significantly, Gilroy also recognizes the danger of a stultifying memory and reminds us that 'the black body seldom speaks for itself. Some people will always see a scar on tortured flesh', pointing to the role of subjective perception in deciphering that message of the body (2000: 263–4, 255).

21 For a lengthier description of this process of self-realization, see Matus, 'Postscript on *Paradise*' (1998: 154–67).

22 As in the 'hottest peppers in the world [which] though many customers tried planting the seeds, the pepper grew nowhere outside the Covent's garden' (11).

23 Cohen makes this link even clearer in his not unrelated analysis of Edmond Jabès and the concept of the Book. Quoting from Jabès, Cohen writes that 'if "making a book, or rather, helping it to come into being means above all blurring its utopian tracks, wiping out the trace" [. . .] it is because its "utopia" – its consummation as Book – is what presents itself only in the form of an erasure' (122).

24 For a discussion on the trope of home see Morrison, 'Home'. In 'The Changing Same', Justine Baillie adopts Morrison's use of the term 'home' and, reworking it along Gilroy's notion of a contestatory diasporic negotiation of racial politics, she applies it to *Paradise*. This application reveals Morrison's own literary, linguistic, civic, religious and fundamentally racial, oppositional reformulations of paradise as 'home'.

25 Consider, for example, the establishment of the Morgan bank, Menu's recourse to alcohol as a way of dealing with his pain, the violent attack on the women and even the sympathetic Reverend Misner who turns to the sign rather than to language. In contrast, the women in the novel are depicted as more insightful and more comfortable with intangibility and ephemerality: it is the women, for example, who see the ghosts. Furthermore, there is an important and striking contrast between the (men's) heated debate about the inscription as a way to pin down history, and Pat's version of history which resists this grounding when she strays from a conventional linear historical narrative, at first, as well, finally, when she burns her journals. Andrew Read attributes the sharp gender divide to a critical investigation of black masculinity and its devastating stereotypes (2005).

26 See Cohen (53–56) for an analysis of Adorno's work on Hölderlin's poetry as a disruption of an Hegelian teleology. While acknowledging the contextual

differences between Cohen's discussion and my own, I would like to reiterate my suggestion that the explicit Judeo-Christian religious overtones of *Paradise* and the parallel search for language that can transcend the history of trauma in Jewish and in African-American experiences that are found in Adorno and in Morrison justify this potentially problematic juxtaposition of ideas.

27 This is hinted at, for example, in the Blackhorse feature of the 'stick-straight hair', that Billy Cato and both Soane and Dovey had, as well as in the surname of the Blackhorse family.

28 Matus describes the central narrator as 'an intimate, powerful voice that holds its narrative cards close to the chest and releases details out of their chronological order so that the reader is confused, intrigued and hungry for more pieces of the puzzle'. And she goes on to claim that '[a]part from a sermon by Reverend Misner and the history book entry by Patricia Best, the narration belongs to this steady, sympathetic, story-telling voice, [who has an] ability to inhabit many points of view and to pull the past into relation with the present' (156).

29 Other important examples include the story of the horse-race; multiple references to Scout and Easter, Soane and Deek Morgan's sons; and the various mentions of the outside world 'Out There' which establish that external context which the narrative refuses to include in the exclusive space of Ruby.

30 See Peach (158–9) for further consideration of this scene.

31 In his *Between Camps*, Paul Gilroy describes this tendency to repress internal differences in order to assert synthetic identity (102).

32 For a valuable analysis of the political and aesthetic implications of this motif, see Gilroy, 'Third Stone From the Sun: Planetary Humanism and Strategic Universalism', (2000: 327–56).

33 Cohen's comparison of Adorno's ideas with those of Franz Rosenzweig illuminates this structure: '[Adorno's] most explicit statement on the question of form, offers an acute description both of his own work and of the relationship to one another of the *Star*'s nine central chapters: "[a]ll its concepts are to be presented in such a way that they support one another, that each becomes articulated through its configuration [*Konfigurationen*] with the others"' (31). As taken from Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, Vol. 1, 13. This interdependence of the different elements for a cohesive articulation is relevant for many of the expressions of free jazz and for Morrison's *Paradise*.

34 Although Gilroy does, however, lament what he describes as the increasing privileging of visual communication and the decline of sound and music as terms within which racial identification is conducted.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. W. (1933), 'Farewell to jazz', translated by Susan H. Gillespie, in Leppert (2002), pp. 496–500.

—(1936), 'On jazz', translated by Jamie Owen Daniel/Richard Leppert, in Leppert (2002), pp. 470–95.

—(1938), 'On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening', in J. M. Bernstein (ed.) *The Culture Industry*. London: Routledge, 2001. pp. 29–60.

—(1941), 'Review of *American Jazz Music* by Wilder Hobson and *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid* by Winthrop Sargeant'. *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 7.9, 167–8.

—(1946), 'Jazz', in Dagobert D. Runes and Harry G. Schrickel (eds) *Encyclopedia of the Arts*. New York: Philosophical Library, pp. 511–3.

—(1951), 'Cultural criticism and society', in Adorno (1955), pp.17–34).

—(1953), 'Perennial fashion – jazz', in Adorno (1955), pp. 119—32).

—(1955), *Prisms*, translated by Samuel and Shierry Weber. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.

—(1958), *Philosophy of Modern Music*, translated by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster. London: Continuum, 2003.

—(1961a), 'Mahler', in Adorno (1963), pp. 81–110.

—(1961b), 'Vers une *Musique Informelle*', in Adorno (1963), pp. 269–322.

—(1961c), 'Berg's discoveries in compositional technique', in Adorno (1963), pp. 179–200.

—(1963), *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, translated by Rodney Livingstone. London: Verso, 1998.

—(1970), *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. London: Athlone Press Ltd., 1999.

—(1974), 'Parataxis: on Hölderlin's late poetry', in *Notes to Literature*, Vol. 2, translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

African American Yearbook (*AAY*) (2007/8), viewed 4 April, 2008, http://www.african-americanyearbook.com/files2007/07AAY_p138-142.pdf

Allen, D. E. (2002), 'The role of the blues in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*'. *Callaloo*, 25(1), 257–73.

Baillie, J. (2002), 'The changing same: language, politics and literary tradition in Toni Morrison's fiction', Ph.D (unpub.) University of London.

Baker, H. (1988), *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.

Baker, H. A. (1984), *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Baldwin, J. (1949), 'Everybody's protest novel', in Baldwin (1955), pp.13–23.

—(1950), 'Encounter on the Seine: black meets brown', in Baldwin (1955), pp. 117–23.

—(1951), 'Many thousands gone', in Baldwin (1955), pp.24–45.

—(1953), 'Stranger in the village', in Baldwin (1955), pp.159–75.

—(1955), *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

—(1957), 'Sonny's blues', in *Going to Meet the Man*. New York: The Dial Press, 1965, pp. 101–41.

—(1962), *Another Country*. London: Penguin Books, 1990.

—(1964), 'The uses of the blues'. *Playboy*, January, 131–2, 240–1.

—(1984), 'Preface to the 1984 edition', in Baldwin (1955), pp. ix–xvi.

Balshaw, M. (2000), *Looking for Harlem: Urban Aesthetics in African American Literature*. London: Pluto Press.

Barthes, R. (1981), 'The discourse of history', translated by Stephen Bann. *Comparative Criticism*, 3, 7–20.

Batker, C. (1998), ' "Love me like I like to be": the sexual politics of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the classic blues and the Black Women's Club movement'. *African American Review*, 32(2), 119–213.

Bell, R. P. (1979), 'Gayl Jones takes a look at *Corregidora* – an interview', in R. P. Bell, B. J. Parker & B. Guy-Sheftall (eds) *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Blacks Women in Literature*. New York: Anchor Press, 1979, pp. 282–7.

Béthune, C. (2003), *Adorno et le Jazz: Analyse d'un déni esthétique*. Paris: Klincksieck.

Brown, L. (ed.) (1933), *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Bureau of Justice Statistics (*BJS*) (2007), *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006*. Revised March, 2008, viewed 4 April, 2008, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pjim06.pdf

Campbell, J. (1992), *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin*. London: Faber and Faber.

Cartiér, X. W. (1987), *Be-bop, Re-bop*, New York: Available Press.

Cohen, J. (2003), *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy*. London: Continuum.

Davis, A. Y. (1999), *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Davis, C. (1988), 'Interview with Toni Morrison', in Gates (1993), pp. 412–20.

Davis, M. (1989), *Miles: The Autobiography*, with Quincy Troupe. London: Picador.

DeVeaux, S. (1991), 'Constructing the jazz tradition: jazz historiography'. *Black American Literary Forum*, 25(3), 525–60.

—(1997), *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History*. London: Picador, 1999.

Diamond, A. and Edwards, L. R. (eds) (1977), *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903), *The Souls of Black Folk*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

Eckstein, L. (2006), 'A Love Supreme: jazzthetic strategies in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*'. *African American Review*, 40(2), 271–83.

Ellison, R. (1952), *Invisible Man*, 2nd edn. New York: Vintage International, Second Edn, 1995.

—(1964), *Shadow and Act*. New York: Vintage International, 1995.

—(1999), *Juneteenth*. John F. Callahan (ed). New York: Random House.

Favor, J. M. (1999), *Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Fox, R. E. (2001), 'Ishmael Reed', in W. L. Andrews, F. S. Foster, and Trudier Harris (eds) *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 344–6.

Franklin, J. H. Jr and Moss, A. A. (eds) (1947) *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (7th edn). London: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994.

Gabbard, K. (2002), 'The word jazz' and 'Images of jazz', in M. Cooke and D. Horn (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–6, 332–46.

Gabbard, K. (ed.) (1995), *Jazz Among the Discourses.* London: Duke University Press.

Gates, H. L. (1988), *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—(1993), *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, H. L. Gates Jr and K. A. Appiah (eds). New York: Amistad Press.

Gennari, J. (1998), 'Recovering the noisy lostness: history in the age of jazz'. *Journal of Urban History,* 24(2), 226–34.

Gibson, D. B. 'Text and countertext in *The Bluest Eye*', in Gates (1993), pp. 159–74.

Gilroy, P. (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* London: Verso.

—(2000), *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race.* London: Penguin Books.

Grandt, J. E. (2004), 'Kinds of Blue: Toni Morrison, Hans Janowitz, and the jazz aesthetic'. *African American Review*, 38(2), 303–22.

Gussow, A. (2002), *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition.* London: University of Chicago Press.

Hamilton, M. (2007). *In Search of the Blues: Black Voices, White Visions.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Harding, J. M. (1995), 'Adorno, Ellison, and the critique of jazz'. *Cultural Critique*, 13, 129–58.

Hegarty, P. (2007), *Noise/Music: A History.* London: Continuum.

Herrnstein, R. J. and Murray, C. (1994), *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life.* New York: Free Press.

hooks, b. (1990), 'Postmodern blackness', in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics.* Boston: South End Press, pp. 23–31.

Horsman, R. (1981), *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism.* Cambridge : Harvard University Press

Hughes, L. (1940), *The Big Sea.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1997.

—(1958), 'Jazz as communication', in *The Langston Hughes Reader.* New York: Braziller, pp. 492–4.

—(1994), *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes.* Arnold Rampersad (ed). New York: Vintage Classic Edition, 1995.

—(1961), *The Best of Simple.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1995, pp. 117–9.

Hurston, Z. N. (1928), 'How it feels to be colored me', in *I Love Myself When I am Laughing: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*, Alice Walker (ed). New York: The Feminist Press, 1979, 152–5.

—(1937), *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

—(1942), 'Story in Harlem slang', in *The Complete Stories.* New York: HarperCollins, 1995, 127–138.

Johnson, J. W. (1912), *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man.* New York: Dover Publications, 1995.

Johnson, M. V. (1998), '"The world in a jug and the stopper in [her] hand": *Their Eyes* as blues performance'. *African American Review,* 32(3), 401–14.

Jones, G. (1975), *Corregidora.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1986.

Jones, L. (Amiri Baraka) (1961), 'The jazz avant-garde', in Jones (1967: 69–80).

—(1963), *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music that Developed From It.* Edinburgh: Payback Press, 1995.

—(1964), 'Sonny Rollins', in Jones (1967), pp.52–55.

—(1966), 'The changing same (R&B and new black music)', in Jones (1967), pp.180–211.

—(1967), *Black Music.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1998.

Jost, E. (1974), *Free Jazz.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1994.

Kahn, A. (2002), *A Love Supreme/The Creation of John Coltrane's Classic Album.* London: Granta Books.

Kérchy, A. (2006), 'Narrating the beat of the heart, jazzing the text of desire: a comparative interface of James Baldwin's *Another Country* and Toni Morrison's *Jazz*', in King & Scott (2006), pp.37–62.

King, L. and Scott L. O. (eds) (2006), *James Baldwin and Toni Morrison: Comparative Critical and Theoretical Essays.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Klotman, P. R. (1979), 'Dick-and-Jane and the Shirley Temple sensibility in the Bluest Eye'. *Black American Literature Forum,* 13(4),123–5.

Kodat, C. G. (2003), 'Conversing with ourselves: canon, freedom, jazz'. *American Quarterly,* 55(1), 1–28.

Kun, J. (1999), 'Life according to the beat: James Baldwin, Bessie Smith, and the perilous sounds of love', in D. McBride (ed.) *James Baldwin Now.* London: New York University Press, pp. 307–28.

Layton, B. (ed. and trans.) (1987), *The Gnostic Scriptures.* London: SCM Press.

Leppert. R. (ed.) (2002), *Essays on Music.* London: University of California Press.

Levin, M. and Wilson, J. S. (1949), 'No bop roots in jazz: Parker'. *Down Beat,* September 9.

Levine, L. (1977), *Black Culture and Black Consciousness.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Lott, E. (1988), 'Double V, double-time: bebop's politics of style'. *Callaloo,* 36, 597–605.

Mandel, H. (2008), *Miles, Ornette, Cecil: Jazz Beyond Jazz.* New York: Routledge.

Marcuse, H. (1978), *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Marks, K. (2002), *Toni Morrison's* Beloved *and the Apotropaic Imagination.* London: University of Missouri Press.

Matus, J. (1998), *Toni Morrison.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

McKay, N. (1983), 'An Interview with Toni Morrison', in Gates (1993), pp. 396–411.

Miner, M. M. (1985), 'Lady no longer sings the blues: rape, madness, and silence in *The Bluest Eye*', in M. Pryse and H. J. Spillers (eds) *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 176–91.

Mobley, M. S. (1995), 'Call and response: voice, community, and dialogic structures in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*', in V. Smith (ed.) *New Essays on Song of Solomon.* New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 41–68.

Morrison, T. (1970), *The Bluest Eye.* London: Vintage, 1999.

—(1977), *Song of Solomon.* New York: Penguin Books, 1987.

—(1983), 'Recitatif', in I. A. Baraka and A. Baraka (eds) *Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women.* New York: Morrow.

—(1984), 'Rootedness: the ancestor as foundation', in M. Evans (ed.) *Black Women Writers (1950–1980) A Critical Evaluation.* New York: Anchor Press, pp. 339–45.

—(1992a), *Jazz.* London: Pan Books Ltd, 1993.

—(1992b), *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* London: Picador, 1993.

—(1997a), 'Home', in W. Lubiano (ed.) *The House That Race Built.* New York: Vintage Books, 1998, pp. 3–12.

—(1997b), *Paradise.* New York: Plume, 1999.

—(2003), *Love.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Moses, C. (1999), 'The blues aesthetic in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye'. African American Review*, 33(4), 623–37.

Moten, F. (2003), *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Munton, A. (1997), 'Misreading Morrison, mishearing jazz'. *Journal of American Studies*, 31(2), 235–51.

Nettl, B. (1974), 'Thoughts on improvisation: a comparative approach'. *The Musical Quarterly*, 60(1), 1–19.

Nisenson, E. (2000), *The Making of Kind of Blue: Miles Davis and His Masterpiece.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Oliver, P. (1968), *Screening the Blues: Aspects of the Blues Tradition.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1989.

O'Meally, R. (1998), *Jazz Cadence of American Culture.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Omry, K. (2007), 'Literary free jazz? *Mumbo Jumbo* and *Paradise'. African American Review*, 41(1), 127–41.

Paddison, N. (1996), *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture: Essays on Critical Theory and Music.* London: Kahn & Averill.

Paquet-Deyris, A-M, (2001), 'Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and the city'. *African American Review*, 35(2), 219–31.

Peach, L. (2000), 'The 1990s: Jazz (1992) and Paradise (1998)', in *Toni Morrison*, 2nd edn. London: Macmillan Press, pp. 154–6.

Porter, H. A. (2001), *Jazz Country: Ralph Ellison in America.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Porter, L. (1999), *John Coltrane: His Life and Music.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

Porter, T. J. (2001), 'The social roots of African American music: 1950–1970', in J. L. Conyers (ed.) *African American Jazz and Rap: Social and Philosophical Examinations of Black Expressive Behavior.* London: McFarland & Company, pp. 83–9.

Read, A. (2005), 'As if word magic had anything to do with the courage it took to be a man'. *African American Review*, 39(4), 527–41.

Reed, I. (1972), *Mumbo Jumbo.* New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1996.

Rice, A. (1994a), 'Jazzing it up a storm: the execution and meaning of Toni Morrison's jazzy prose style'. *Journal of American Studies*, 28(3), 423–32.

—(1994b), 'Finger-snapping to train-dancing and back again: the development of a jazz style in African American prose'. *The Yearbook of English Studies,* 25, 105–16.

—(1997), 'Erupting funk: the political style of Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* and *The Bluest Eye*', in D. L. Madsen (ed.) *Post-Colonial Literatures.* London: Pluto Press.

—(2000), '"It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing": jazz's many uses for Toni Morrison', in Saadi A. Simawe (ed.) *Black Orpheus: Music in African American Fiction from the Harlem Renaissance to Toni Morrison.* New York: Garland, pp. 153–80.

Robinson, J. B. (1994), 'The jazz essays of Theodor Adorno: some thoughts on jazz reception in Weimar Germany'. *Popular Music,* 13.1, 1–25.

Rufer, J. (1961), *Composition with twelve notes, related only to one another,* translated by. H. Searle. London: Barrie and Rockliff.

Saul, S. (2003), *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Scheiber, A. (2006), 'Jazz and the future blues: Toni Morrison's urban folk zone'. *Modern Fiction Studies,* 52(2), 470–94, 543.

Shamoon Z. (1994), 'An interview with Ishmael Reed'. *Callaloo,* 17(4), 1131–57.

Shank, B. (2003), 'Bliss, or blackface sentiment'. *Boundary 2,* 30(2), 47–64.

Shipton, A. (2001), *A New History of Jazz.* London: Continuum.

Sligh, C. (1989), *Reading Dick and Jane With Me.* Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press.

Smedley, A. (1993), *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview.* Oxford: Westview Press.

Smith, D. (1998), 'Mixing tragedy and folklore'. *The New York Times,* 8 January, B2.

Smith, V. (1985), 'Song of Solomon: continuities of community', in Gates (1993), pp. 274–83.

Sollors, W. (1986), *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spaulding, A. T. (2004), 'Embracing chaos in narrative form: the bebop aesthetic in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*'. *Callaloo,* 27(2), 481–501.

Subotnik, R. (1976), 'Adorno's diagnosis of Beethoven's late style: early symptom of a fatal condition' in Subotnik (1991: 15–41).

—(1977), 'Why is Adorno's criticism the way it is?', in Subotnik (1991), pp .42–56.

—(1978), 'This historical structure: Adorno's "French" model for the criticism of nineteenth-century music' in Subotnik (1991), pp. 206–38.

—(1979), 'Kant, Adorno, and the self-critique of reason: toward a model for music criticism', in Subotnik (1991), pp.57–83.

—(1991), *Developing Variations.* Oxford: University of Minnesota Press.

Taft, M. (2006), *The Blues Lyric Formula.* New York: Routledge.

Tally, J. (2001), *The Story of Jazz: Toni Morrison's Dialogic Imagination.* Hamburg: LIT VERLAG.

Tirro, F. (1977), *Jazz: A History,* 2nd edn, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993.

Townsend, P. (2000), *Jazz in American Culture.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Tracy, S. C. (2001), *Langston Hughes and the Blues.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Tucker, S. (2000), *Swing Shift: All-Girl Bands of the 1940s.* London: Duke University Press.

Werner, C. H. (1994), *Playing the Changes: from Afro-Modernism to the Jazz Impulse*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Werrlein, D. (2005), 'Not so fast, Dick and Jane: reimagining childhood and nation in The Bluest Eye'. *MELUS*, 30(4), 53–73.

Wilson, J. S. (1949), 'Bird wrong; bop must get a beat'. *Down Beat*, 7 October.

Wilson, P. N. (1999), *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Brooks.

Witkin, R. (1998), *Adorno on Music*. London: Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L. (1968), *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wright, R. (1937), *Black Boy*. Cleveland,: World Publishing Company, 1950.

—(1940), *Native Son*. New York: Perennial Classics, 1998.

Yaffe, D. (2006), *Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Discography

Baldwin, J., D. Linx and P. Van Dormael (1986), *A Lover's Question*. Label Blue, 1999.

Coleman, O. (1959a), *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. Atlantic 1317.

— (1959b), *The Change of the Century*. Atlantic 1327.

— (1960), *Free Jazz*. Atlantic Masters 81227 3609–2, 2002.

Coltrane, J. (1961), *Impressions*. Impulse! Records 731454341622, 2000.

— (1965), *Ascension*; Verve 543 413–2, 2000.

Davis, M. (1951), *Dig*. Prestige, 7012.

— (1958), *Milestones*. Columbia, CK 85203, 2001.

— (1959), *Kind of Blue*. Columbia, CK 64935, 1997.

Gordon, D. (1947), 'The chase'. *Bebop Spoken Here: Confirmation*. Proper Records, P1138.

Holiday, B. (1939), *Lady Sings the Blues*. The Entertainers CD228, 1956.

O'Meally, R. G. (ed.) (1996), *Audio Companion to Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. London: W. W. Norton.

Parker, C. (1947), 'Scrapple from the apple'. *Bebop Spoken Here: Confirmation*. Proper Records, P1138.

— (1948) 'Parker's mood'. *Bebop Spoken Here: How High the Moon*. Proper Records, P1139.

Smith, B. (1923), *Midnight Blues* Classics, 1994.

Sun Ra (1961), *The Futuristic Sounds of Sun Ra*. Savoy MG 12138.

Taylor, C. (1958), *Looking Ahead*. Contemporary 3562.

This page intentionally left blank

Index