
The Canonization of Jazz and Afro-American Literature

Author(s): Gregory V. Thomas

Source: *Callaloo*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Jazz Poetics: A Special Issue (Winter, 2002), pp. 288-308

Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3300429>

Accessed: 28-08-2021 16:44 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

The Johns Hopkins University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Callaloo*

THE CANONIZATION OF JAZZ AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

by Gregory V. Thomas

Institutionalized jazz is the route we have to take in order to reach the masses. How else can we get hundreds of thousands of people to understand what it is that we've mastered or garnered from the masters . . . ?

—Clark Terry, *Jazz Master*¹

The year 2000 marked the approximate centenary of jazz music. In its early years, jazz was, to some, the polar opposite of culture. Jazz was new, raucous, accessible, spontaneous, and American, while culture seemed to be traditional, harmonious, exclusive, complex, and European (Levine, "Jazz" 174). Today, jazz is considered by many to be America's most original and sophisticated artistic export. Some even call jazz America's classical art form. The clearest indication that jazz has "arrived," however, may be its institutionalization in the American academy and in elite institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center. The story of the transition in the status of jazz from folk to popular to fine art is a fascinating one and will receive some theoretical formulation in this essay. Yet, the main focus involves canonization, specifically the canonization of the art form jazz (mainly through the window of Jazz at Lincoln Center, hereafter referred to as JALC) in comparison to the canonization of Afro-American literature.

Canonization is the process by which a person, a work (or oeuvre), or a form is assessed by institutional elites and experts as of high value, value so high that the person, the work, or the form will be remembered and studied over long periods of time. Canons are yardsticks of value used especially in academia. As John Guillory puts it: "The problem of the canon is a problem of syllabus and curriculum, the institutional forms by which works are preserved as *great* works" (Guillory 240, *emphasis in original*). As sturdy and self-sufficient as a canon may seem at a particular moment in time, over time, it changes:

The canon changes constantly because historical circumstances and stimuli change and people therefore approach it in myriad ways, bringing different perspectives and needs to it, reading it in ways distinctive to the times in which they live, and emerging with different satisfactions and revelations. (Levine, *Opening* 93)

Callaloo 25.1 (2002) 288–308

Although canons change, the very process of delineating the fundamentals of a form, and the individuals and works that drive a form's development, solidifies for lay people, critics, scholars, and practitioners of the form, who's who and what's what.

Disagreements over who is who and what is what are part and parcel of the jostling, positioning, and power plays attendant to the canonization process. If the institutional elites have little or no competition, then their opinions may carry the day. For example, the Roman Catholic Church had no competition over canonic interpretation of Christianity and the Bible. Then came Martin Luther's Protestant challenge. University experts in English departments have, over the past, say, sixty years decided which fiction and poetry are among "the great works." These works and their authors become part of anthologies, which are assigned to undergraduate students. The imprimatur of the university (along with a body of criticism) has been a primary means through which certain writers and literary works have achieved canonical status. Yet the fate of such paradigm-defining movements as the New Criticism shows that counter-movements can displace or re-define the basis of a particular canon formation. The controversies over JALC during the 1990s may have, on the surface, revolved around racial considerations; underneath lay questions of who has the authority to define what jazz means as well as the identity of the foundational figures of the idiom.² Control of meaning is power. Culture is the terrain of this "struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interest of dominant groups" (Storey 3). Just as through the canonization process black literary theorists resist the notion that blacks have not produced a literary tradition worth studying, so JALC attempts to wrest definitional control from white critics and others in the past and present who use jazz for their own ends; for instance, the Communist left in the twenties and thirties; the State Department and Cold Warriors in the fifties and sixties; or fusion radio stations in the seventies, eighties, and nineties.

The tale of Western literary and musical canon formation has shown the connection among institutionalization, values, and power.³ This conjunction is inevitable when canons are devised. The fundamental question therefore is: what are the grounds for legitimacy?

. . . teaching subjects in school and college gives them cultural legitimacy. And what we're witnessing in our society at present is a struggle over legitimacy, which explains why the current confrontation over the curriculum is so public. (Levine 98)

Who has the legitimacy and authority to determine cultural canons, in this instance, a black American literary canon and a canon for jazz, a black American cultural product? What is this authority based on? Do these canonical forms have essential features? What are the shortcomings of canons? In considering these issues, I intend to point in the direction so well articulated by Levine:

If we understood the canonical process and dynamic better than we do, if we had a truer comprehension of the canon's relation to

the larger culture, we would more clearly understand the process of change within the university—and within our society as well. (101)

II

Jazz has been canonized in the American academy since the 1950s, when it became a part of university curricula.⁴ Yet even since the 1920s, jazz devotees have bestowed canonical status upon artists such as Louis Armstrong, who is considered the patriarch of the art. This tendency is not confined to fans and musicians, according to Krin Gabbard, editor of two path-breaking volumes of jazz scholarship, *Jazz Among the Discourses* and *Representing Jazz*. Gabbard contends that the major tendency of jazz scholarship has been the uncritical canonization of jazz artists. He questions the wisdom of this tendency in light of developments in other scholarly fields.

Scholarly writing today in literature, music, and art is increasingly less likely to be built around the unequivocal glorification of the artist or the bald valorizing of one artist over another. . . . If a discipline can be considered “professionalized” when it develops its own meta-language and self-consciousness about its canon, then jazz study is still in its infancy. (Gabbard)

Gabbard takes to task Gunther Schuller, author of *The Swing Era*, for rejecting “scholarly prose in favor of journalistic terms” and for seldom considering the music’s “contextual and historical relationships.” Martin Williams, author of *The Jazz Tradition* and compiler of the set of recordings which comprise the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* (a canonizing anthology which as yet has no competition), is also criticized by Gabbard. Williams was very influenced by New Criticism in the 1950s while working on a graduate degree in English at Columbia University. Formalist literary principles of organic unity thus guided Williams’s analytical approach, and led him to downplay non-musical considerations. Musicologist Gary Tomlinson claims that jazz textbooks “insist in their prefaces and their presentations on the priority of listening to and analyzing musical styles.” All refer to Williams’s *Smithsonian Collection*, which for Tomlinson is *prima facie* evidence that “the personal canon of one insightful (but conservative) critic” has been amplified “into a statement of transcendent artistic worth.” This “monological canon” purportedly preempts a “dialogical” jazz pedagogy that focuses on how music acquires its meaning(s) through the interaction of the social and the artistic (Tomlinson). Gabbard compares Williams’s work unfavorably to the efforts of Henry Louis Gates in creating a canon of black American literature. According to Gabbard, the inclusion of a sound recording with the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (hereafter referred to as the *NAAAL*), featuring readings of poetry, novels, and the like, emphasizes the oral and performative dimensions of much of black literature. Gabbard also claims that Gates has changed the rules of canon-formation. Gabbard does not explain exactly in what

way he thinks Gates has transformed canon-making rules, though he implies that the inclusion of an *oral* artifact with a literary canon is revolutionary.

Whether or not Gates has transformed canon making itself, he certainly has risen to the top of the heap among literary theorists of black American literature. Robert Stepto deserves recognition in this regard, as do Houston Baker and Hortense Spillers, among others. Yet, it is Gates who has taken furthest the institution-building task of codifying black American literature, building on principles and theories which come from a vernacular black American tradition *and* which builds on the Western critical tradition. (Gates calls the distinction between the Negro vernacular and the Western the signifying black difference. More on signifying later.) Gates is of import to our comparison for several reasons. He is a theorist, journalist, and an institution-builder, similar to the roles played by Wynton Marsalis, Stanley Crouch, and Albert Murray in Jazz at Lincoln Center's existence. Gates is the figure most people would likely associate with a canon of black literature. Likewise, considering the prominence of Marsalis and Crouch, Murray's recognition by cultural elites during the past quarter century, coupled with the institutional status of Lincoln Center, the effort to define a jazz canon may become associated with JALC.⁵ Gates is also an institutional elite who has exercised the power of his position on behalf of a cultural product of black Americans.

The institutionalization of African American literature via a canon-determining anthology is one way of describing what the *NAAAL*, edited by Gates and Nellie McKay, represents. There have been several other Negro American anthologies since the mid-19th century; yet the imprimatur of the "Norton Anthology" insures that it will be the anthology against which all others will be compared. (See note 8.) A sketch of Gates's institutional affiliations demonstrates how he has become a member of the institutional elite. Yale and Cambridge Universities were his undergraduate and graduate schools respectively. He wrote for *Time* magazine in the mid-1970s while in graduate school. He taught at Yale, Cornell, and Duke before being hand-picked to run a revamped African American Studies program at Harvard by Henry Rovsky, called by some the dean of American academics. In 1981, he won one of the first MacArthur Prize Fellowship (a so-called "genius" grant) awards. He has entrée to the mainstream press; for instance, writing regularly for the elite *New Yorker* in the early 1990s.

Of course, Gates's interpersonal, political, and entrepreneurial skills must be factored into the equation. He has also positioned himself as a reasonable mean between the defenders of the Western traditions as universal and Afrocentrists, who argue that Western Civilization got its impetus from Egypt, ancient civilization on the African continent.⁶ Gates has critics, some of whom claim he is a modern-day Booker T. Washington (Thomas 24). Essayist and cultural critic Gerald Early has written that Gates's career is an "expression of the needs of both blacks and whites to have someone like him who can authorize and legitimate, interpret and codify black culture: curator of the black museum and carnival barker for the black cultural sideshow" (Early 7). Black American literary canon-formation and the *NAAAL* have critics also.

In a paper published in 1987, Cornel West writes of his suspicions about attempts to "justify and legitimate canon formation in Afro-American literary criticism." His first concern is the focus on black texts taking attention away from the project of demystifying the already existing Western canon. This narrow focus is founded on:

. . . the class interests of Afro-American literary critics; they become the academic superintendents of a segment of an expanded canon or a separate canon. Such supervisory power over Afro-American literary culture not only ensures slots for black literary scholars in highly competitive English departments. More important, these slots are themselves held up as evidence for the success of prevailing ideologies of pluralism. Such talk of success masks the ever-growing power of universities over American literary culture, and more specifically, the increasing authority over Afro-American literary practices and products. (West 199)

West argues further that the defensive posture of much of Afro-American literary criticism has resulted in overblown claims about black literary achievement. Black expressive culture in homiletics and music far exceeds black literary achievement, he contends. Moreover, black literary canon-formation may cause less attention to be given to the handful of major black American writers (in West's opinion, Jean Toomer, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Ishmael Reed): ". . . it is difficult to imagine an Afro-American canon-formation that does not domesticate and dilute the literary power and historical significance of these major figures."

In a critique of a fundamental tenet of his now Harvard colleague, West repudiates Gates's formalistic focus on figurative language. He thinks (or thought at the time) that Gates's approach of looking at the black tradition to see how it theorizes about itself:

. . . proceeds on the dubious notion that theories of criticism must be developed from literature itself—be it vernacular, oral, or highbrow literature. To put it crudely, this notion rests upon a fetishism of literature—a religious belief in the magical powers of a glorified set of particular cultural archives somehow autonomous and disconnected from other social practices.

Whether or not West would make the same argument today I do not know.⁷ Yet, the argument that theorization of a black literary tradition should be primarily based on the "repeated and revised figures, tropes, and themes in prior works" which constitute that tradition is not unreasonable. Neither does this tenet necessarily presume that the "literary" is an autonomous realm from everyday life or other social practices. Literature can reflect and critically comment upon politics and other social practices. Literature can also serve a rhetorical, persuasive function, thus inspiring public action of one sort or another.

Gates admits that his "biases toward canon-formation are to stress the formal relationship that obtains among texts in the black tradition . . . and to stress the vernacular roots of the tradition." Why would an emphasis on formal relations and vernacular roots necessarily connote a "fetishism of literature?" Just because the advocates of the New Criticism fell into the trap of separating literature from history does not mean that others who emphasize formal aspects will do the same. Also

unsound is West's argument about a focus on black literary texts taking attention away from the demystification of the Western canon. Since black texts of necessity comment upon and contend with the texts of European and white American writers (as well as that of other black writers,) the demystification (or, at least, statement-counterstatement) can occur in the text, and/or the reader's mind. I do think, however, that West's analysis of the class interests of Afro-American literary critics is sound, and that Gates may exemplify the supervisory power West feared.

Gerald Early thinks that the *NAAAL* represents conflicting aspirations "based on imperfect thinking about race and culture." He holds that the anthology strives to be democratic, inclusive and egalitarian while being elitist and exclusive in an Arnoldian fashion at the same time. Early deepens his critique:

With the addition of a section of "folk" literature that covers everything from field hollers to rap, what we have, in this volume, is the extraordinary instance of a book that pretends to be highbrow, middle-brow, an no-brow simultaneously. It is bourgeois philistine, academically theoretical, and street-hip all at once. (Early 7)

In a review of the *NAAAL*, literary scholar Jerry Ward acknowledges how, in principle, canons impose a needed sense of order for pedagogical purposes. In practice, however,

... canons tend toward the prescriptive. They hide their artifice and historicity in the language of absolutes, of givens, as they make the boundaries of choice all too uniform. At this extreme canon formation better serves the ends of power than the ends of freedom and responsibility for coming to know something of cultural and literary history. (4)

III

The dangers of canon making are clear. First, trying to be too many things to too many people, thus not being enough to anyone. Second, the determination of who's in and out of a canon, and which works are in or out, occurring too often by a few institutional elites, who may use narrow, self-serving criteria for selection. Third, the possibility of an overshadowing of the work of the truly great (always few in number) because of a bias toward inclusion, resulting in minor figures outnumbering the major. The last point carries a certain irony, because canons, when looked at by those who are left out, are associated with exclusion. The fact is that inclusion and exclusion both occur in the process of creating an anthology. The question then becomes: what is the basis for selection? Let us use the explanation offered in the *NAAAL* as a test case.⁸

As stated earlier, Henry Louis Gates is largely responsible for the visibility of black American literature in the United States. In relation to the *NAAAL* specifically, he sealed the deal to create the volume and provided stewardship for the completion of

the project.⁹ But Gates's role can be overemphasized. In addition to Gates, there were ten editors of the anthology. The project had close to fifty scholars on its board of advisors.

The editors selected 120 writers, 52 of whom are women. The dicta for selection were:

1. . . . works of such quality that they merit preservation and sustain classroom interest.
2. (à la Abrams) Serves classroom through a) in-depth study of major writers b) complete works where possible c) detailed introductions and annotations d) each editor having the freedom to maintain his or her own distinctive voice (although each will follow agreed-upon guidelines) e) the anthology being portable, easy to carry to class.

As can be seen above, teaching a tradition to students is the primary pedagogical goal of a canon. Traditions change as do responses to traditions, however, and fierce battles over the major and minor figures, as well as who decides which is which, will continue.

As with the Gates-led *NAAAL*, teaching an artistic tradition to future generations of young people is the primary impetus behind Jazz at Lincoln Center's canon-creation efforts. The dozens of workshops, concerts, lectures, radio broadcasts, and international tours undertaken by Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra during each season of JALC is proof of this motivation. In fact, the content of the JALC *Jazz for Young People Curriculum Project* is based upon the "Jazz for Young People" concert series, which has been held at Alice Tully Hall for the past decade. However, defining the "jazz tradition" is a subject of dispute. In "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography" Scott DeVeaux questions the scholarly utility of what he calls

. . . the official version of jazz history: jazz as a coherent whole with a succession of styles or periods, each with a conveniently distinctive label and time period: New Orleans jazz up through the 1920s, swing in the 1930s, bebop in the 1940s, cool jazz and hard bop in the 1950s, free jazz and fusion in the 1960s. Details of emphasis vary. But from textbook to textbook there is a substantive agreement on the defining features of each style, the pantheon of great innovators, and the canon of recorded masterpieces." (525)

What's wrong with this seeming unanimity of perspective among writers of jazz textbooks?¹⁰ For one, according to DeVeaux, after bebop, "the evolutionary lineage begins to dissolve into the inconclusive coexistence of many different, and in some cases mutually hostile, styles." Two, it misleads students into believing that jazz history is "bound up with a pluralism that somehow reconciles these apparently irreconcilable trends." He acknowledges the need for order in jazz history, but wonders if the consensus model may have been misapplied in pre-bebop jazz history as well.

Next, DeVeaux summarizes the rancorous “controversy over the current state and future direction of jazz” in the popular media. In one corner, the “neoclassicists” prioritize “tradition” over the avant-garde or free jazz, and over commercialized fusion. (The work of Miles Davis from the late 1960s on is an example of fusion, as is the recordings of Spyro Gyra from the late 1970s to the present.) In the other corner, free and fusion advocates claim the neoclassicists are not *with the times*. Whether in the classroom or in the journalistic debate:

... no one disputes the official version of the history. Its basic narrative shape and its value for a music that is routinely denied respect and institutional support are accepted virtually without question. The struggle is over *possession* of that history and the legitimacy that it confers. More precisely, the struggle is over the act of definition that is presumed to lie at the history’s core ... that some central essence named jazz remains constant through all the dramatic transformations that have resulted in modern-day jazz. (emphasis in original)

To DeVeaux, the “jazz tradition” is a recent creation, “an overarching narrative that has crowded out other possible interpretations of the complicated and variegated cultural phenomena that we cluster under the umbrella *jazz*” (emphasis in original).

At the end of his paper, DeVeaux levies additional criticisms of the neoclassicist attitude, personified by Marsalis, the artistic director of JALC:

What distinguishes the neoclassicist attitude is not so much its habit of retrospection, but rather its heavyhanded attempt to regulate the music of the present through an idealized representation of the past. History is a roll call of past masters, from King Oliver to Thelonious Monk, and the responsibility of the modern musician is to create music that lives up to and extends this legacy. All else—free jazz and fusion alike—is falsity and charlatanism.

While I agree with DeVeaux that the so-called neo-classicists reject the easy pluralism that “would embrace all potential definitions for jazz, and therefore all potential outcomes for the narrative of its history,” I disagree with the general tenor of the quotation above.¹¹ Acknowledging past masters of an idiom or art form is not necessarily an idealized representation; and even a neoclassicist knows that history is more than a “great man” theory. During all the Jazz for Young People’s workshops held at Alice Tully Hall by JALC which I have attended, a social, cultural, and historical frame is always provided to the audience of youngsters. A re-framing of DeVeaux’s contention that the musician’s charge is “to create music that lives up to and extends this legacy” is also in order. If a young musician wants to play in the musical style known as jazz, should not he or she should be cognizant of the sweep of the tradition’s legacy, so the foundation for, say, section playing, improvising, or composing *within and/or without* the tradition can be laid? If the musicians performing under the banner of jazz do not apprehend this legacy, how can it be preserved or extended?

Since the issue of which styles and persons fit within the jazz canon is fundamental to this essay, I will quote at length from Marsalis himself on the issue of free jazz and fusion. An interview with Marsalis was published in the spring 1990 issue of *Callaloo*, a year before DeVeaux's article appeared. Early in the Q & A Marsalis discussed the conception he strove for with his first groups. He spoke of a dramatic rhythmic approach, and the goals of learning how to play different moods and interpret standard tunes. None of these things, he stated, was possible coming out of the 1970s. The interviewer asked him what "coming out of the 1970s" meant. Marsalis responded:

The era of fusion where everybody just played funk, or jazz fusion, which is not really a jazz style. It's more of a pop style because it is based more on playing a backbeat, and having showy technique, than really addressing the blues or standard songs. It doesn't really swing. They don't really deal with harmony. And the rhythms they deal with are the most generic forms of rhythms from other countries.

Later in the interview, Marsalis expanded upon his earlier comments.

What makes fusion not jazz is that certain key elements of jazz are not addressed. First and foremost the blues. If you aren't addressing the blues you can't be playing jazz. Then the second thing is that music, in its 20-something years of existence, has become just what it always wanted to be—pop music. . . . [F]usion . . . relieves us, our country, of the problem of dealing with jazz and the contribution of the Negro to the mythology of America. The question in jazz has always been: is it pop music or is it a classical music? And I don't mean classical in terms of European music, but I mean does it have formal aspects that make it worthy of study, and does it carry pertinent mythic information about being American. . . . [T]hese musicians . . . relieved all of the cultural pressure that Duke Ellington placed on our nation to address the music seriously and teach it, which would make us deal with ourselves and our racism, which everyone knows is our greatest problem, even more so than dope.

Marsalis's main objection to so-called avant-garde or free jazz is its disregard for technique. While discussing technique in music, he commented upon the stereotype that black people "are involved only in the province of feeling and the insinuation is that there is no technique or intellect at work. But man is both intellectual and spiritual. The spirit fuels the intellect. The intellect provides the insight and understanding for greater spiritual development." Gospel great Mahalia Jackson and Louis Armstrong, to some, solely had soul. Duke Ellington, to others, was too technical, and therefore had no soul, was too European.

The list of those types of cliché's goes on and on in relation to our music. What ends up happening is that one aspect of jazz music

became really technical and over-refined; everybody wanted to play fast. Then another element . . . addressed the cliché that our music had no technique in it. That's what we call the avant-garde school. They're soulful cats. They have the right attitudes and they are a certain type of men. You'd like them. They're cool. But they don't really deal with music from a technical standpoint at all. So the level of sophistication that you hear in Louis Armstrong's playing you'll never really hear in the avant-garde style.

Ornette Coleman is one of the most prominent musicians identified with free jazz. Does Marsalis ban him from his pantheon of jazz greats? In an interview published in the October 1995 issue of *American Heritage* magazine, Marsalis enumerated what he considers the essential elements of jazz, and then listed the people he perceives as key within the idiom.¹² Coleman is on the list, right after John Coltrane. In reference to Coleman, Marsalis says:

He brought another way of playing the blues, a real country way of playing the blues, the Texas blues. The sound of Charlie Parker, the whole tradition of the saxophone—Parker, Johnny Hodges—really resonates when Ornette plays. He plays very short themes, but they're very melodic. He's a genius melodic improviser.

Int: What about the free-jazz innovations of his that everybody talks about?

WM: That's just what they talk about. He's had one conception that was innovative, of playing across the bar. He hears phrases rhythmically a certain way. He doesn't think, "I have to fit this melody into eight bars." He'll play it in seven, or seven and a half, or whatever. He hears across-bar phrases. I love that, and I try to write my own music like that.

Int: Do you understand what he calls his harmolodic theory?

WM: No, I think that's just some type of theoretical conception he wants to talk about. I don't think it's what he's playing.

Int: What is he playing?

WM: He's playing country blues. In short phrases. I've talked to Ornette about his notion of free jazz. I don't understand it. I think it's chaos. Maybe it's not, but that's what I think it is. Chaos is always out there; it's something you can get from any fifty kids in a bandroom. *I'm in favor of using that conception when kids first start playing. It helps them explore their instruments and music without restraint. (79, emphasis added)*

As can be readily seen from the italicized portion above, not only does Marsalis include "free" jazz players in his pantheon. He also supports that conception, for

pedagogical reasons, at the beginning stages of a musician's development. Yet, since he endeavors to increase the general level of musicianship, he is wary of the general effect of free jazz.

The essence of jazz is that you play it. We should have jazz bands all over the country. You need a form of music that's easy enough for everybody to play. If you keep coming up with the new thing that nobody can play or nobody wants to hear, it's like so-called free jazz, nobody wants to hear it. But I can imagine people playing parade music and sounding good. Playing little simple tunes, Walt Disney tunes, man—they're simple, they're songs anybody can improvise on. I can imagine an elementary-school band learning how to play that. Why does jazz have to go down the same road that killed European music? We've seen that doesn't work. (84)

Free jazz, akin to atonal European music, is a turn-off, and will neither inspire increased listenership nor musicianship, according to Marsalis. His views on free jazz, as we have seen in the comments above, are consistent with his take on the essential elements of jazz and his educational imperative.

Marsalis clearly has no truck with "fusion jazz." One reason is formalistic: fusion, to Marsalis, does not exhibit enough of the formal characteristics of jazz to be legitimately placed under its heading. Another reason is fusion's commercial underpinnings, with record companies and radio stations calling fusion "jazz," using it as a signifier, in order to give it a veneer of respectability. (WQCD 101.9 FM in NYC is a prime example.) Though not averse to commercialism per se, Marsalis does object to the commercial misuse of the term "jazz." He also thinks fusion musicians accept the jazz label because it increases their career longevity in a fickle pop market. Another reason, I suspect, for his vehement objection to fusion is that Marsalis identifies it with the music he played as a teenager, which at that time blinded him to the greatness of the legacy bequeathed to him by his father, jazz pianist Ellis Marsalis, fellow Louisiana native Louis Armstrong, et al.

Free jazz fits on the periphery of Marsalis's jazz canon; fusion falls outside of it. So DeVaux's claim that neoclassicists like Marsalis view free jazz as "falsity and charlatanism" is not wholly accurate. Yet these two styles are included in JALC's *Jazz for Young People Curriculum Project*, which in my view is the culmination of the canon-creation efforts of Marsalis and JALC.¹³ If there ever was an occasion for Marsalis to display a "heavy-handed attempt to regulate the music of the present through an idealized representation of the past"—DeVaux's charge—it was in this instance. Yet, "What is Avant Garde/Fusion?" is included as a subject/theme in the planning materials I viewed. Ultimately, the JALC canon strives to improve jazz education for kids in elementary through junior high school, foundational stages in a young person's development. If a young person, say, somewhere between the ages of nine and thirteen, learns about jazz, its meanings, history, and place in American culture, then that young person may be inspired to learn how to play music. Or the child may better appreciate American music, the American myth, and the roles of blacks in that

story. Ironically, this curriculum project counters DeVeaux's most damning criticism of the "neoclassical" tendency to gain legitimation through institutionalization: "degree programs, instrumental contests, repertory ensembles, institutes, and archives." DeVeaux claims that this process "necessitates increased distance from the popular." The outreach efforts of JALC strongly indicate an attempt to *popularize what jazz means in American history and to American culture*. At the end of the aforementioned 1995 interview in *American Heritage*, Marsalis says that jazz is both high art and popular, not mutually exclusive. By popular, he means *relative* popularity:

It won't be as popular as some stuff, but does it have to sell ten million? Isn't a million popular? I've sold millions of albums. I have two gold albums. That's a million right there. Bringing jazz in its real form to as many people as possible—that's what I'm fighting to do. That's really what my goal is.

JALC would certainly agree with Clark Terry's statement in the epigraph: "Institutionalized jazz is the route we have to take in order to reach the masses."

IV

The fact that Marsalis is an accomplished jazz and classical player who is an articulate, young, black American spokesman opened the way for his entrée into Lincoln Center's high art environs in the late 1980s.¹⁴ Marsalis brought along two of his main intellectual mentors, Stanley Crouch and Albert Murray. Crouch is a journalist with a strong literary background and antagonistic feelings towards black nationalism. (This rancor is largely based on a dominant strain of black nationalism, in which Africa and things African are romanticized, and American identity is denied or obscured.) He has been known as a jazz critic since the late 1960s. He became the artistic consultant to the JALC program in 1989. After the publication of his first book of essays, *Notes of a Hanging Judge* in 1990, he was awarded a MacArthur Prize Fellowship, the award which Gates attained almost a decade earlier. Since then, Crouch has published two more books of essays, a novel, and is a columnist with the New York *Daily News*. He even served for a short time as a commentator on *60 Minutes*, rising from humble beginnings to the status of an institutional elite.

Albert Murray, a contemporary and close friend of the late novelist and essayist Ralph Ellison and the late artist Romare Bearden, has been an intellectual father to Crouch, and is an intellectual grandfather to Marsalis, (who met Murray through Crouch). In anthropological terms, Murray has been a native insider to the jazz scene since the late 1930s, when he was a student at the Tuskegee Institute. He was close with his idol, Duke Ellington, who called him "the unsquarest person I know." He is the author of the as-told-to biography of Count Basie, *Good Morning Blues*, and *Stomping the Blues*, a perspicacious poetics on jazz and the blues idiom, as well as ten other books, including three novels and a book of poetry. *Stomping the Blues* places the

music within an indigenous, ritualistic context. To Murray, the blues are not a lamentation based on the sociological status of blacks; to the contrary, Murray posits that the blues represents a confrontational and affirmative attitude toward life. Even though life is a low-down dirty shame (with no ultimate purpose¹⁵), those with heroic aspirations respond to the inevitability of the blues with nimbleness and elegance on the dance floor of life. In an elaboration of Ellington's declaration that "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing," Murray writes:

... when the Negro musician or dancer swings the blues, he is fulfilling the same fundamental existential requirement that determines the mission of the poet, the priest, and the medicine man. He is making an affirmative and hence exemplary and heroic response to that which Andre Malraux describes as *la condition humaine*. Extemporizing in response to the exigencies of the situation in which he finds himself, he is confronting, acknowledging, and contending with the infernal absurdities and ever-impending frustrations inherent in the nature of all existence by *playing with the possibilities that are also there*. Thus does man the player become man the stylizer and by the same token the humanizer of chaos; and thus does play become ritual, ceremony, and art; and thus also does the dance-beat improvisation of experience in the blues idiom become survival technique, esthetic equipment for living, and a central element in the dynamics of U.S. Negro life style. (*Omni-Americans* 58, *emphasis in original*)

Murray's oeuvre has been recognized by his peers in elite cultural circles, i.e., in 1997 he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and received a lifetime achievement award from the National Book Critics Circle. He also has been awarded several honorary doctorate degrees.

Taken together, Marsalis, Crouch, and Murray comprised a three-generation team that successfully challenged the dominance of white jazz critics as the authorities on jazz music.¹⁶ In 1995, Marsalis, after issuing a challenge to him in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, debated Lincoln Collier, thoroughly thrashing him. In a 1981 article, "Chitlins at the Waldorf,"¹⁷ Crouch wrote the following about Murray's *Stomping the Blues*:

It dismissed much of the prep school WASP jazz writing on the one hand, and unseated the Jewish riders of rickety and wooden socio-moralistic stallions on the other, and was vituperatively attacked by many members of both camps. . . . While white writers have been bemoaning the term "race records," it had no derogatory meaning within the black community—on the contrary, the term was one of prideful celebration. The significance and value of dance and dance halls is made clear, and Murray goes on to show that the desire so many white writers had for the music to leave those circumstances is no more than Europhile provincialism. (47)

Culture as exemplified by aesthetic achievement is a linchpin of this triumvirate's belief system. They believe an American culture exists, and, within that framework, a Negro or blues idiom of expression. Jazz is both a metaphor for, and a representation in sound of, American culture and the blues idiom. (Or, as Murray puts it, jazz is the "fully-orchestrated blues statement.") American culture is based on a synthesis of vernacular (folk) elements and the learned traditions of Europe.¹⁸

As the summary above indicates, JALC posits a theory of American culture with jazz at its core. Perhaps this is the key distinction between the canonization of jazz, as represented by JALC, and the canonization of black American literature, as represented by Gates and the NAAAL. To be sure, similarities exist between Gates's status vis-à-vis an Afro-American literary canon and the JALC team relative to a jazz canon, as pointed out earlier in this essay. On a theoretical level, the focus on vernacular origins is another commonality. Deeper similarities will be indicated shortly. Gates, however, does not want to subsume his disciplinary and theoretical authority under an Americanist banner. In "Canon-Formation and the Afro-American Tradition," (from *Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s*, edited by Houston Baker and Patricia Redmond) Gates writes:

How does this matter of the black canon of criticism affect our attempts to define canon(s) of black literature? I believe, first of all, that until we free ourselves of the notion that we are "just Americans," as Ellison might put it, and that what is good and proper for Americanists is good and proper for Afro-Americanists, we shall remain indentured servants to white masters, female and male, and to the Western tradition, yielding the most fundamental right that any tradition possesses, and that is the right to define itself, its own terms for order, its very own presuppositions. (29–30)

In the aforementioned 1990 *Callaloo* interview, Marsalis was queried:

Int: A lot of African-American scholars have argued for the creation of a black aesthetic, saying that we need some criteria to evaluate cultural and artistic achievement that is ours. Do you support that call?

WM: No. I think that the question is how can we incorporate the achievement of Afro-Americans into the American aesthetic.

With so much in common, what is the basis for the ideological distinction between the stances of Gates and Marsalis? That each works within distinct disciplinary and institutional structures is a factor. Gates's authority in the academy is grounded in his study and theorization of Afro-American literature *and* in Black Studies as a field. Gates perhaps thinks he would be committing disciplinary suicide if he conceded the "black." Marsalis, on the other hand, has authority as a performer, composer (he won a Pulitzer Prize for his long composition, "Blood on the Fields," in 1997), and via his

association with Lincoln Center. He is not trying to sell his program to the academy per se. Neither was Ralph Ellison; nor are Crouch or Murray, all deeply influential on Marsalis's thinking. In addition, JALC is appealing, in its curriculum efforts, to a younger audience of students than does the NAAAL. In addition to holding a fundamental aversion to aesthetic racialism, perhaps JALC believes that marketing jazz as American, and not as exclusively "black," may have more appeal to elementary and junior high teachers and administrators.

Another distinction is musical achievement of jazz versus the literary accomplishment of black American writers. Few dispute the musical and cultural achievement of jazz. In fact, jazz revolutionized the way Western instruments are played, with its slurs, vocal effects, so-called "dirty-tone," and so forth. Gates, in the introduction to the NAAAL, even substantiates a "black" American literary tradition with reference to jazz:

Precisely because "blackness" is a socially constructed category, it must be learned through imitation, and its literary representations must also be learned in the same way—like jazz—through repetition and revision.

Would anyone attempt to substantiate the worth of jazz through references to the achievement of Afro-American literature? As Cornel West argued earlier, many black American literary theorists work from a defensive posture and may thus exaggerate the extent of achievement in Afro-American letters. Perhaps the more secure level of accomplishment of jazz allows Marsalis and company to acknowledge the black origins of jazz while not clinging to its "blackness," thus freeing it to attain universality.¹⁹

JALC is also empowered by an aesthetic theory that, in addition to the "black" component, encompasses the entirety of American culture, whether folk, popular, or fine. The folk or the vernacular is a down-home, provincial dimension. For instance, the twelve-bar blues is an example of this dimension. Popularity, of course, denotes a wide appeal; yet that which is popular today is often gone tomorrow, is ephemeral. The fine art dimension involves individual artists who use vernacular, popular, and other fine art sources to craft aesthetic statements with more nuance, sophistication, and comprehensiveness than appear in folk or most popular forms. As Murray explains:

The crucial factor involved in distinguishing between fine art and folk and between fine art and pop art, it should be remembered, is not the raw material or subject as such. It is rather the quality of the extension, elaboration, and refinement involved in the creative process, the process . . . that transforms or stylizes raw, direct experience into aesthetic statement. In other words, it was Armstrong's phenomenal technical mastery of his instrument coupled with the unique emotional range of his sensibility that gave his renditions the range, subtlety, and profundity that placed his best performances in the category of fine art. (*Blue Devils* 64)

The legitimacy of jazz as a fine art is assured as the next century approaches. Yet this status as high art does not preclude a desire to popularize jazz on the part of the JALC canonizers. Their own mission statement is proof positive: "Jazz at Lincoln Center aspires to reach and educate the public about the great American art form of jazz and maintain jazz at the forefront of America's cultural consciousness through performance, education, and preservation." JALC represents a shift of sorts in elite, high cultural emporiums such as Lincoln Center. This democratization may help bridge the gap between the high and the popular, even between the upper-class elites who engineered the building of Lincoln Center and those so unceremoniously uprooted. But to bridge gaps on these levels involves cultural and political work of a high order. I contend that the work of Gates (and others supporting the canonization of black literatures), and Marsalis and company, is just this type of work.

V

Even considering the distinctions in the positions taken by Marsalis and Gates, the similarities in the process through which the two forms, jazz and Afro-American literature, achieved institutional and canonical status can reveal much about cultural change and cultural politics. The Civil Rights and Black Arts movements of the 1960s ushered the way for the entry of Black Studies into the American academy. The gates of academia opened, too, for the influx of more students of color than ever before. Gates was a part of this first wave. In his ascent upward, he studied American, European, African, and African-American literature at Yale and Cambridge, gaining knowledge and the legitimacy conferred by such institutions. By the time Gates took the helm of Harvard's Afro-American Studies program in 1991, he had long since benefited from the increased literary productivity of black Americans and the enlargement of the black reading public. But he also helped constitute the increased recognition of black American literature as a viable market for the publishing industry. The 1984 Gates-edited *Black Literature & Literary Theory*, and his *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Criticism* (1988), signaled the arrival of an area of serious scholarly inquiry within the American academy, the very institution which had barely taken notice of literature by blacks theretofore. With the exception of Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison, no black American writers achieved literary prominence in the United States before the 1970s. Once the publishing industry became aware of a viable marketing niche, the combination of more books published by and about blacks, an increased audience (the burgeoning black middle-class), and a scholarly, theoretical underpinning, became an irresistible combination.

Jazz had been institutionalized in the academy already, and anthologized in William's *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*, by the mid- to late-1980s, when *Classic Jazz at Lincoln Center* was created. So JALC can be viewed as riding a wave of recognition of jazz as important enough to canonize and study. But in terms of the record industry and the development of the jazz idiom post-John Coltrane, there was

a wane, not a wave. The one-two-three punch of R&B, Rock, and Fusion took its toll on the popularity of jazz. Enters Wynton Marsalis, who in 1977 performed staples of the European trumpet repertoire with the New Orleans Philharmonic. He was 16 at the time. At 18, he began attending Juilliard and performing with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, a training ground for many trumpet greats since the mid-1950s. By the time his first jazz and classical albums were released (in 1982 and 1983 respectively), his reputation as a talented and opinionated young lion was established.

Not that there was not great jazz being played and recorded in the late 1970s to early 1980s, the period just discussed. After all, though Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington died during the 1970s, many greats and near-greats were still going strong. For example, Benny Carter (alto saxophone); Oscar Peterson and Hank Jones (piano); Ray Brown (bass); Max Roach and Roy Haynes (drums); Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon (tenor saxophone); Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie, Freddie Hubbard, and Woody Shaw (trumpet); and vocalists Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, and Sarah Vaughn. Nonetheless, Marsalis's youthful brashness, undeniable musical talent, and unequivocal counter-statement of the visual and sonic representations of Fusion and Rock, heralded a renaissance of jazz styles from its earliest days to the mid-1960s. A group of young upstarts began to come to terms with the legacy of jazz styles, stylistic innovators, *and* attempted to take back authority from others who had either used the music for their own political and ideological ends or had misunderstood, and thus misrepresented, some aspect or another of the music and its place in American and black American history and culture. Marsalis undoubtedly led this charge, with guidance from Crouch, Murray, and other jazz elders, along the way. So, by the late 1980s, when he began working with and in Lincoln Center, Marsalis had not only waged battle with critics and other musicians over what jazz was and was not; he had met and influenced a generation of young musicians who dedicated themselves to careers in the music industry as jazz musicians. The troops are still growing, as indicated by the plethora of recordings by young jazz artists released since the late 1980s.

VI

In the introduction of two special issues of *Cultural Critique* (Fall and Spring 1987) dedicated to minority discourse *vis-à-vis* dominant, hegemonic cultures, editors Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd write: "One aspect of the struggle between hegemonic cultures and minorities is the recovery and mediation of cultural practices which have been and continue to be subjected to institutional forgetting. Thus archival work is essential to the critical articulation of a minority discourse." Thereafter, the editors indicate the indispensability of work at the theoretical level. Yet since the academy was the location they directed their attention to, little or no mention was made regarding the importance of the use of the culture industry (i.e., mass media) as a tactical arena. The canonizers of black American literature and jazz have not lost sight of this site.

Earlier in this essay, I stated that Gates and the JALC trio were similar because of a combination of theory, journalism, and institution building (which, of course, has an archival component.) Gates's signifying theory resonates with sign/signifier discourse post-Saussure while amplifying and explicating a vernacular black American practice. Murray's folk-popular-fine distinction echoes the folk, middle-brow, high hierarchical sets of culture which undergirds Western high art ideology, yet subverts the reasoning that would place European classical music on a higher cultural scale than jazz. Gates uses the canon concept to validate black American literary practices while being critical of the primacy of the Western canon as a universal proposition. Murray posits the blues idiom as having universal appeal, based on the way black Americans have extended, elaborated and refined the cultural particulars "that impinge most intimately on one's everyday existence," not based on exclusion of the "other." Gates's name and reputation extends beyond the academy through his access to the print and television media, which synergistically increases his high profile in the academy. Crouch has served as a one-man publicity band for Marsalis and JALC, writing liner notes for all of Marsalis's and JALC's albums. His own celebrity (and in some circles, notoriety) and media presence supplements and supports JALC and the theory it is founded upon. To bring off the *NAAAL*, Gates networked with key canonizers of the Western tradition and then team-led a posse of fellow scholars of Afro-American literature. To institutionalize jazz in Lincoln Center, Marsalis brought in Crouch and Murray, whom brought in Rob Gibson, the executive producer and director for the first decade of JALC's existence. The individuals, foundations, trusts, and corporate sponsors that support JALC comprise an elite posse. Furthermore, the JALC Board of Directors includes some of the cultural and financial elite among black Americans. (For instance, Ed Bradley of *60 Minutes*; Dr. Mary Schmidt-Campbell, dean of the NYU Tisch School of the Arts; and Hugh Fierce, who during the 70s and 80s was one of the top black bankers in the United States.)

Defending a "minority" discourse is not easy. And if we view the canonic discourse through the wide tenses provided by Murray, the term "minority" should be rejected anyway. The tale of canon formation of Afro-American literature and jazz shows, that with the combination of cultural change, individual will, talent and teamwork, smart strategy and tactics, and concerted follow-through, there is a way to not only defend a cultural discourse, but to project it to the very highest realms in the university and cultural emporiums such as Lincoln Center. In this essay, we have pursued an understanding of the process through which jazz and Afro-American literature have undergone the process of canonization. The details of the development of the *NAAAL* was provided. In conclusion, I will detail how Jazz at Lincoln Center became a constituent organization at Lincoln Center, the most prestigious performing arts institution in the United States.

After three summer seasons as *Classical Jazz at Lincoln Center*, a committee partially comprised of several members of the Lincoln Center Board of Directors was formed. This committee sponsored a review of other non-profit institutions around the country and found that: "... no national institution broadly devoted to an extensive range of jazz activities exists." In 1989, an audience survey of the *Classical Jazz* series found that it drew a new, younger, and more diverse audience to Lincoln Center. In

the report, "A Permanent Jazz Presence at Lincoln Center," (June 4, 1990) the committee made the following recommendations:

1. A year-round presence of jazz via a Department of Jazz Programs.
2. Successful implementation determined by:
 - a) artistic excellence of programs presented.
 - b) financial health and stability of programs.
 - c) Support of a broad and diverse audience.
 - d) Ability of the new programs to contribute to and involve the family of constituents at Lincoln Center.

On December 18, 1995, the Lincoln Center Board of Director's met and discussed the report that proposed that the jazz department become a full-fledged constituent. The board President at the time, Nathan Leventhal, said that the final report was the most thoroughly backgrounded item brought to the board in the twelve years of his tenure. Gordon Davis, then Chairman of the JALC Board of Directors, thanked the board for its support, and then pointed out how active the JALC Board had been. This active participation was crucial, Davis said, because they are *creating an institution*. He further stated that the JALC Board had been a critical force in raising the necessary endowment.

The report's conclusion reveals the reasoning that lead to the acceptance of Jazz at Lincoln Center as a constituent:

Jazz is a distinguished but often neglected musical expression. Lincoln Center can recognize its substantial accomplishments. Cultural institutions have been notoriously derelict in their treatment of jazz and jazz musicians, for example, no major arts organization has made a meaningful commitment to the art form. Since jazz is one of America's greatest contributions to the performing arts, it is appropriate for Lincoln Center, as this nation's symbol of artistic achievement, to acknowledge jazz as a classic art form.

JALC has been a constituent for seven years now. It has grown from existing as a summer fill-in program in the late 80s to a full-fledged constituent department currently raising \$115 million for a performance and education facility at a major development being built at Columbus Circle in midtown Manhattan. In the post-September 11th environment, raising funds for such capital projects is difficult. Does this bode ill for Jazz at Lincoln Center's canon-building mission? The answer remains to be seen.

NOTES

1. See Ed Enright's "On Golden Bonds," *Down Beat* (July 1997), p.20.
2. The charge levied by journalist Gene Lees, Chip Defaa, and author James Lincoln Collier, among others, that JALC excludes whites based on race is, to be blunt, nonsense, and perhaps involves jealousy and projection. In its short existence, JALC has likely employed more whites in its orchestra and commissions than its constituent siblings have hired blacks, in comparable capacities, over the past 30 years. The charge that JALC has a bias toward young musicians is accurate, however. Marsalis has told this writer that he leans more in the direction of young musicians because they hold the key to the music's future direction. Of course, young musicians need to serve apprenticeships with older musicians, a practice formerly a common part of jazz culture.
3. Especially revealing in this regard are Barbara Herrnstein Smith's *Contingencies of Value* and the epilogue to the Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman edited volume, *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*.
4. William McFarlin, former Director of the International Association of Jazz Educators, has said that "some 15,000 of America's 28,000 secondary schools have jazz programs." This quote comes from a very good essay, "Jazz and the Academy," in James Lincoln Collier's *Jazz: The American Theme Song*. [New York: Oxford University Press], 1993. In the 2001/2002 Jazz Education Guide published by *JazzTimes* magazine, writer Bill Milkowski reports that "student's can earn a bachelor's or master's degree in jazz studies at one of 120 colleges and universities throughout the country. In addition, four universities offer a doctoral degree in jazz studies: University of Miami, New York University, University of North Carolina at Greeley, and University of Southern California."
5. Defining and projecting a jazz canon is one of JALC's stated goals. The other three are to: present performances of the highest quality; teach adults and children the relationship to jazz to other art forms; and develop a world-class database to provide historical and intellectual frames of reference.
6. In *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*, political scientist Adolph Reed blasts Gates for such centrism.
7. West's argument is similar to the point that Tomlinson and Gabbard made earlier about the work of Gunther Schuller and Martin Williams.
8. Other anthologies are riding the 1990s explosion of black literature and theory, yet I focus on the Norton anthology because, as Gates has written, "A well-marketed anthology—particularly a Norton anthology—functions in the academy to *create* a tradition, as well as to define and preserve it."
9. In 1986, while teaching at Cornell, Gates approached a colleague, M.H. Abrams, about the idea. (Abrams is one of the seven men who Cornel West calls "the major Western high literary canonizers of our century.") Abrams approached John Benedict, then the in-house editor of various Norton anthologies. Benedict signed on. Fifteen years later, the *NAAAL* is being used in college classrooms.
10. There are four major jazz textbooks on the market that are used in university jazz appreciation courses.
11. This rejection of an "easy pluralism" by the neoclassicists would seem to be a way of addressing what Deveau identified as a problem in jazz historiography. DeVeaux does not address this point in his paper, perhaps because of his critique of the so-called neoclassicists.
12. To Marsalis, those key elements are: 1. Playing, where one takes an idea or theme and fiddles with it, and where formal parameters are set and then challenged. 2. The desire to play with other people. 3. A respect for individuality and different approaches, with the intent to reconcile differences and maintain dialogue. 4. The blues, as music (combining dissonance and consonance), and as philosophy (which perhaps can be summed up as a tragicomic sensibility or an optimism suffused with tragic awareness). 5. Swing, constant coordination in an environment in which one's equilibrium is challenged. 6. Collective improvisation. 7. Syncopation, unexpected accents. 8. Call and response. 9. Achieving vocal effects on instruments. 10. A spirit of worldliness, in which jazz is connected to other musics from around the world.
13. Over the past four years, this educational program, originally called the *Louis Armstrong Jazz Curriculum Project*, has gone through a pilot stage in five cities, and has incorporated the impressions of teachers and students. The textbook is slated to go to market in February 2002.

14. The need to fill blank summer programming space, and a desire to broaden their audience, were also incentives for the powers that be at Lincoln Center. I also suspect that the desire to counter the popular culture status of rap music may also have been an incentive.
15. Murray's categorization of types of narrative statement, as found in *The Hero and the Blues*, ends with farce, indicative of a modernist take on the absurdity of existence in the Age of Science. On the ground, however, it simply indicates that life is about "perpetual readjustment and improvisation."
16. Crouch once told this writer that writing for *Downbeat*, the best-selling jazz magazine, would give them too much creditability. However, he recently began writing a regular column for *Jazz Times* magazine.
17. The title itself indicates a mixture of the folk and the fine.
18. This theory of American culture is based on the work of Constance Rourke and John A. Kouwenhoven.
19. This universality is not based on an Us-Other binary grounded in relations of domination. Jazz has specific cultural and historical origins; yet it includes so many elements from various traditions, and symbolizes such a powerful response to modern existence that, according to Murray, its implications are universal. Furthermore, black Americans, obviously, have not been in the social or political position to dominate other groups.

WORKS CITED

- Crouch, Stanley. "Chitlins at the Waldorf." *Notes of a Hanging Judge*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- DeVeaux, Scott. "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography." *Black American Literature Forum* (Fall 1991).
- Early, Gerald. "Conflicting Aspirations." *American Book Review* (September-October 1997).
- Enright, Ed. "On Golden Bonds." *Down Beat* (July 1997).
- Gabbard, Krin. "The Jazz Canon and Its Consequences." *Jazz Among the Discourses*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Guillory, John. "Canon." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Ed. Frank Lettrichia and Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Levine, Lawrence. "Jazz and American Culture." *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- . *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.
- McFarlin, William. "Jazz and the Academy." *Jazz: The American Theme Song*. Ed. James Lincoln Collier. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Murray, Albert. *The Blue Devils of Nada*. New York: Pantheon, 1996.
- . *The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture*. New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970.
- Storey, John. "Cultural Studies: An Introduction." *What Is Cultural Studies? A Reader*. Great Britain: Arnold, 1996.
- Thomas, Greg. "The Black Studies War." *Village Voice* (January 20, 1995).
- Tomlinson, Gary. "Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies." *Black Music Research Journal* 11:2 (Fall 1991): 246–51.
- Ward, Jerry. "Jes Grew Seeking a Text." *American Book Review* (Sept.-Oct. 1997).
- West, Cornel. "Minority Discourse and the Problems of Canon Formation." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* (1987).