BREAKING SOUND BARRIERS:

READING THE JAZZ NOVEL AS A MODEL FOR MORE FLEXIBLE SOCIAL INTERACTION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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Abstract

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In this study, I examine the "jazz novel" from a global perspective, following recent trends in musicology which attempt to restore the international gaps in the canonical "American" jazz historical narrative. I introduce the essays by providing some contextual, historical, and theoretical framework for breaking the "sound barrier" – comparing visual literature with aural music – as well as establishing the value of music in maintaining a transnational community within the African diaspora. In the first chapter, I argue that Ralph Ellison incorporates the transnational fusion of Afro-Cuban jazz both thematically and structurally in his landmark novel *Invisible Man*. By integrating the Cuban rhythms of the rumba beneath the jazz aesthetic in the text, Ellison formally mirrors Afro-Cuban jazz, precipitating later transnational and international jazz novels. In the second chapter, I examine the transculturation of Scottish folk music and "American" jazz in Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet.* I claim that Kay finds a model for her protagonist, Joss Moody, in African American jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and an aesthetic corollary for a "more fluid" conception of identity in the subgenre he helped establish – bebop. In the reciprocal of my reading of *Invisible Man*, I argue that Kay combines "American" bebop rhythms beneath a uniquely Scottish voice, moving the setting and characters beyond the United States and more fully demonstrating the global influence and significance of jazz. In addition to the transnational dimension of my argument, I maintain that both novels join other jazz texts in subverting the boundary between author/narrator and reader, proposing a more egalitarian antiphonic relationship between composer, performer, and audience while placing the ultimate agency on the response of the latter. Building on these examples, I conclude that jazz serves as both an ethical and aesthetic model for a less rigid perception of identity and more flexible interaction in an increasingly interconnected, pluralistic global community.

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Intro

The origins of jazz are the stuff of legend because they occurred in places the people responsible for the recording of "History" did not go – or, rather, did not admit to going: brothels and red-light districts, alcohol-fueled dancehalls, and African American communities, in general. When the music did occasionally permeate "cultured" society, it was disavowed as barbaric and regressive, a return to "uncivilized," primitive forms, as exemplified in a snobbish 1924 editorial in the *New York Times*: "Jazz, especially when it depends so much on that ghastly instrument, the saxophone, offends people with musical tastes already formed, and it prevents the formation of musical taste by others" ("A Subject of Serious Study"). While musicians in New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City, and New York were creating one of the most celebrated and revolutionary musical styles of the twentieth century, the American elite were obstinately renouncing the music and looking to Europe for "real" culture, even as jazz quickly spread throughout the planet. In an ironic reversal, however, less than a century later, with jazz increasingly dependent on its global popularity, it has been appropriated by the same cultural elite as "America's Music." If there were any doubts about the music's status as such, Ken Burns jettisoned them in his monumental PBS series *Jazz* (the companion book to which is subtitled *A History of America's Music*), which first aired in January 2001 to usher in the new millennium. In the mid-twentieth century, jazz may have been "yet not in the age of history," as Ralph Ellison contended, lingering instead "in that of folklore" (*Shadow and Act* 205), but as Burns' documentary attests, it had indeed reached "the age of history" by the century's end. And, like any history, it has been condensed into a neat, linear, exclusionary narrative, emphasizing certain people and places and

eliminating others, most notably any activity or influence beyond the borders of the United States.

Discussing Burns' documentary in the introduction to *Jazz Planet*, E. Taylor Atkins observes that, although providing a much needed revitalization to the genre, the film was generally attacked by critics for devoting most of its focus to the early years and only one disc to developments since 1960, for bestowing too much attention on figures such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington while underemphasizing other deserving artists, and for relying too heavily "on canonical figures and developments" (xi). According to Atkins, however, few American jazz critics objected to the disregard of virtually all influences and advances outside the United States, despite the music's swift and pervasive global influence:

> Jazz, though certainly born on U.S. soil was both product and instigator of early twentieth-century processes and trends that were global in scope: the mass manufacture of culture, urbanization, the leisure revolution, and primitivism. It is this fact – combined with the sheer, and early, ubiquity of the music – that leads us to conclude that, practically from its inception, jazz was a harbinger for what we now call "globalization." In no one's mind have the music's ties to its country of origin been severed, yet the historical record proves that it has for some time had global significance, if not necessarily for the commonly accepted purely aesthetic reasons. Jazz exists in our collective imagination as both a *national* and *postnational* music but it is studied almost exclusively in the former incarnation. (*xiii*)

In the decade since Burns' documentary, there has finally been an attempt in musicology to fill in the international gaps in the now-canonical American jazz narrative. This trend, however, has

not yet been adequately reflected in literary scholarship of the "jazz novel," with the majority of such studies focusing exclusively on a canonical "American" conception of jazz, such as the one presented in Burns' documentary, as it relates to novels by American authors set in the United States. In this project, I attempt to address this critical void by looking at the influence of "transnational" jazz in a canonical American novel – Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* – as well as "American" jazz in a transnational novel – Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*.

But why jazz? Is the music not dead or, at most, dying? How much value can it have when it is no longer "popular" music? In responding to these questions, I will defer to the grand "Duke" of jazz, Mister Ellington himself, who, in an attempt to move toward a definition of the musical tradition he helped establish, claims, "Just as the classic form [of music] represents strict adherence to a structural standard, just as romantic music represents a rebellion against fixed forms in favor of more personal utterance, so jazz continues the pattern of barrier-breaking, and emerges as the freest form of musical expression we have seen yet" (256). Although one may contest his acknowledgement of jazz's existence in a strictly Western cultural/musical linear heritage, Ellington touches on a key characteristic of jazz: its ability to break barriers. It is precisely this quality that, in my view, makes a jazz aesthetic as pertinent as ever, if not more so.

One of the barriers which any "musical" reading of a written text must confront and seek to circumvent is what I will call the "sound barrier." How does one compare an expressive medium which is nonlinguistic and aural in essence with one that is inherently the opposite? Roland Barthes offers a potential response which could help facilitate an apposition, instead of opposition, of the two mediums: "[T]he readerly text is a *tonal* text (for which habit creates a reading process just as conditioned as our hearing: one might say there is a *reading eye* as there is a tonal ear, so that to unlearn the readerly would be the same as to unlearn the tonal)" (*S/Z* 30).

Our eye is conditioned to read text, in other words, in a similar manner that our ears are trained to listen to music (to recognize patterns, repetition, allusions, harmony, dissonance, etc.). The novels I investigate formally mirror traits associated with jazz – improvisation, call-and-response, and syncopated rhythms – which are recognizable to the "reading eye" as well as the "tonal ear." By conditioning our eyes to read these qualities as our ears are trained to hear them, we may discover the points of convergence and learn to *listen* to the texts through a multisensory combination of the visual and the aural. Barthes' exclusive focus on tonality, however, highlights the preeminence of European literary and musical traditions in his thought, a bias he acknowledges while establishing the correlation: "The area of the (readerly) text is comparable at every point to a (classical) musical score" (*S/Z* 28). As much early musicology attempted to evaluate jazz with the criterions established within the European classical tradition, the majority of scholarship on the jazz novel seems to be stuck in a similar groove, and rhythm – so foundational in black musical expression – has been frequently overlooked. Yet, as Julie Huntington observes, "the beat" provides a fundamental connection between the written and the audible: "[T]he term 'rhythm' is useful in that it can be applied to the domains of both music and literature, bridging the divides that often separate the visual work of reading from the aural work of listening" (10). In other words, the rhythms of the language on the page can approximate those of the music in the air; we just have to learn to recognize them.

While investigation of rhythm is fundamental to the study of poetry, though, it is virtually nonexistent in that of prose. Mikhail Bakhtin acknowledges this aversion in "Discourse in the Novel" while seeking to establish modes of stylistically examining the genre: "Novelistic discourse is poetic discourse, but one that does not fit within the frame of provided by the concept of poetic discourse as it now exists" (269). While incompatible with the framework

provided by the concept of poetic discourse, Bakhtin argues that characterizing novelistic prose as an "extra-artistic medium" simply "frees one from the necessity of undertaking stylistic analyses of the novel; it in fact gets rid of the very problem of the stylistics of the novel, permitting one to limit oneself to purely thematic analyses of it" (261). That is not to say stylistics should overtake thematic interpretations; rather, since "[f]orm and content in discourse are one" (Bakhtin 259), the one should complement the other. Hence, because these texts incorporate jazz on a thematic level, they also evoke the music formally, including various rhythmic patterns fundamental to jazz. In the chapters that follow, I explore the generally overlooked role(s) of the "rhythm section," and its dialogic relationship to the theme/"melody," taking Barthes' theory beyond European traditions by using rhythm as a bridge between countries and continents *and* between the reading eye and tonal ear.

Aside from certain structural similarities, I argue there is an ethical parallel between jazz and the fiction it inspires, addressing another critical oversight. Cultural theorist Simon Frith contends that "music, the experience of music for composer/performer and listener alike, gives us a way of being in the world, a way of making sense of it…. [M]usical appreciation is, by its very nature, a process of musical identification, and the aesthetic response is, implicitly, an ethical agreement" (114). The link Frith draws between the ethical and aesthetical is particularly evident in the jazz idiom with the incorporation of a diverse array of voices "speaking" on any given theme and the implied reciprocity between performer(s) and audience, a quality central to my argument. Again, Bakhtin's dialogic theories provide some foundational context for investigating the ethical imperatives these novels present. He describes the polyphony of voices interacting within the novel as heteroglossia and claims such diversity is welcomed by the novelist (in contrast with the poet, who seeks unity of language), making the novel, perhaps, a

more adequate formal equivalent for jazz: "These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the different rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization – this is the basic distinguishing feature of the novel" (263). Although composed by a single author, the internal dialogues and polyphony of voices within the novel bear striking resemblance to the interaction of jazz musicians in a jam session:

> [N]o living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists the same elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme…. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape. (Bakhtin 276)

Likewise, antiphony (or call-and-response) in jazz creates a living dialogue between musicians *and* between them and their audience, incorporating a diversity of voices which "combine to form a structured artistic system, and are subordinated to the stylistic unity of the work as a whole, a unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it" (Bakhtin 262).

Paul Gilroy maintains that "there is a democratic, communitarian dialogue embedded in the practice of antiphony which symbolises and anticipates (but does not guarantee) new, non-dominating social relationships. Lines between self and other are blurred" (79). By transposing this musical quality onto the texts, these novels move toward similar egalitarian relationships between author, narrator(s), and reader – blurring boundaries and suggesting (but not guaranteeing) "new, non-dominating social relationships." The word in living conversation is, Bakhtin argues, like the musical note in jazz improvisation, "directed toward an *answer* and

cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates" (280). Furthermore, understanding occurs *only* through this reciprocal exchange, with Bakhtin favoring the response over the initial call:

> To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other. (282)

The novels I investigate conform to Bakhtin's discursive model by acknowledging and privileging the response – the agency of the reader in creating meaning and understanding and taking such responses beyond the confines of the text through more ethical actions. Toni Morrison's narrator of *Jazz* puts it most elegantly, perhaps, while addressing the reader after "losing control" of her characters toward the end of the novel: "*Talking to you and hearing you answer – that's the kick*" (229).

Both the musical and ethical components of my argument are deeply informed by Paul Gilroy's theories of the African diaspora in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness.* Gilroy wrests art from the annals of the Hegelian hierarchy of human thought and argues instead that music has been fundamental in establishing and maintaining a diasporic community which exists as a "counterculture of modernity" (36). In contrast with "the inappropriate model which *textuality* provides" (36), black musical culture, according to Gilroy, "offers a means to get beyond the related oppositions between essentialists and pseudo-pluralists on the one hand and between totalizing conceptions of tradition, modernity and postmodernity on the other" (36). The ability of music to communicate on an emotional level is central to Gilroy's

argument, and he contends that we need to reevaluate poststructuralist critiques in which "textuality… expands and merges with totality" (77) since an overemphasis on textuality, with its necessary divorce from emotion, "becomes a means to evacuate the problem of human agency" (77). An alternative, he argues, lies in the "structures of feeling which underpin black expressive cultures" (77), facilitating the formation of a "community of needs and solidarity" which stretches across the diaspora and bringing black Atlantic populations to the forefront of our conceptions of history and modernity.

In her book *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson shares Gilroy's critique of poststructuralism and argues the need "to invent ways to get at the power of sound and the ways in which it shapes and is shaped by other cultural practices" (211) which are not "at the expense of ideas about human agency or the phenomenology of sound" (210). She notes the frequent loss of emotion in the linguistic discourse of music:

> This phenomenological discursivity on music, I think, has much to do with the creation of emotion through music. Many of the non-notable aspects of jazz improvisation – including tone color, phrasing, dynamics, rhythmic coordination, and intensity – as well as the intermusical connections that listeners hear in a jazz performance are among the ineffable physical qualities that produce emotional reactions in listeners. These visceral reactions become immediately involved in processes of discursive and cultural interpretation that may result in the attachment of an emotional label to the "feeling." (211)

The "non-notable aspects of jazz improvisation" to which Monson refers are not only beyond representation linguistically but also by means of musical notation. Yet, as Monson observes,

these "ineffable physical qualities" of the music communicate via "emotional reactions in listeners." She suggests, though, that some of the meaning is lost "in the attachment of an emotional label to the 'feeling,'" in the attempt to incorporate it into a linguistic system of signs. The jazz novels I examine, however, retain some of these "non-notable aspects of jazz improvisation" by combining the written and the aural, the thematic and the formal, mirroring a jazz aesthetic which requires the reader/listener to play an active role in the creation of meaning and take agency in the form of an ethical response.

The "intermusical connections" Monson observes in the music translate into jazz texts as intertextual connections – between written, visual, and audible texts. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. notes this characteristic, which he terms Signifyin(g) – "repetition and revision, or repetition with a signal difference" (*xxiv*) – in African American literature and reveals the integral correlation to a jazz aesthetic:

> Improvisation, of course, so fundamental to the very idea of jazz, is 'nothing more' than repetition and revision. In this sort of revision, again where meaning is fixed, it is the realignment of the signifier that is the signal trait of expressive genius. The more mundane the fixed text ("April in Paris" by Charlie Parker, "My Favorite Things" by John Coltrane) the more dramatic the Signifyin(g) revision. (63-4)

As jazz (and especially bebop) musicians repeat and revise earlier standards, many "jazz novels" engage in a complex intertextual web, a quality Michael Jarrett suggests is inevitably shared by the literary theorist, as well: "Because his [*sic*] every note is a response to prior texts, reinforcing or challenging established ways of playing, the jazz musician shares a special kinship with the

critical theorist. Both proceed by elaborating or palimpsestically 'writing over' that which is already composed. Both push interpretation until it becomes invention" (*ix*).

Think of these essays as two sides of the same record. On side A, I investigate the (surprisingly) overlooked influence of the Latin jazz trend of the late 1940s and early 1950s, known at the time as Afro-Cuban jazz or "Cubop," in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.* I argue that Ellison formally mirrors the music by incorporating the Cuban rumba rhythm beneath the often-acknowledged jazz aesthetic in the novel. Ellison's allusion is significant since it challenges us to both question our preconceptions of what constitutes American identity as well as recognize the transnational influence in both a quintessentially "American" art form and a work often considered one of most successfully rendered attempts at the ever-elusive "great American novel." By referring to the transnational fusion between "American" and "Cuban" musical forms, a "hybrid of hybrids" as Raúl A. Fernández categorizes it, Ellison provides an example of music's ability to unite black Atlantic cultures across national and linguistic barriers, expressing the ineffable memory of racial slavery "on a lower frequency," that Gilroy presents in *The Black Atlantic.* Appropriately, it is "on the lower frequencies" of the novel that the narrator suggests he may speak on behalf of the reader(s), breaking the boundary between author/narrator and reader while calling on his audience to provide a more ethical response.

Side B takes the author, setting, and characters beyond the borders of the United States while retaining the influence of "American" jazz, particularly bebop. The focal text is Jackie Kay's celebrated novel *Trumpet* which recounts the life of Scottish jazz trumpeter Joss Moody in the wake of the deathbed discovery that he was born female. Loosely based on the life of American jazz pianist Billy Tipton, Kay creates a Signifyin(g) revision, adding racial and national identity issues relevant to her cultural moment, while structurally incorporating a jazz

aesthetic. In the reciprocal of my reading of *Invisible Man*, I argue that Kay alludes to and employs the "more flexible" rhythms of bebop to explore the liminal space between rigidly defined gender and national boundaries, finding a model for the protagonist in the trumpet player largely responsible for the development of bebop, Dizzy Gillespie. Furthermore, Kay incorporates Scottish folk songs alongside the jazz numbers in the text, creating a transcultural musical fusion similar to Cubop, but with Scottish idioms instead of those of Cuba, and demonstrating more overtly the value of a transculturated jazz aesthetic in negotiating a more flexible worldview in a hybridized, pluralized global community.

Both *Invisible Man* and *Trumpet* are prominent soloists in a band of jazz novels that mirror the music formally by allowing for a diversity of voices to be incorporated into the narrative. Jason Stanyek observes, "One of the principal injunctions of Pan-African music making is precisely its ability to allow multiple perspectives, discourses, and identities to exist simultaneously" (112). By uniting cultures across national and cultural boundaries through "common rhythms" and encouraging a diversity of voices, including those of the audience, these novels reflect the capacity of jazz to both break barriers and foster community. Appropriately, both Ellison and Kay incorporate the jazz subgenre of bebop into the structure of their novels to achieve this:

> One of the most amazing things about bebop was its ability to allow various kinds of identities to exist simultaneously without collapsing them away from their distinctiveness, without their becoming identical. Bebop musicians activated, and in many senses, refined, a way of constructing performance in which musical materials and the processes for creating those materials became inextricably and dialogically linked to personal and communal identities. (Stanyek 117)

Jazz has crossed both national borders and iron curtains; it has circumvented language and cultural barriers. But the music has also fostered an international jazz community, uniting people across space and time. The music, as Atkins puts it, "was both product and instigator of early twentieth-century processes and trends that were global in scope" (*xiii*). As those trends have continued and technologies have advanced to create an interconnected global community, a jazz aesthetic serves as an increasingly pertinent allegory for more fluid cross-cultural interaction – "an apt metaphor," in Monson's words, "for more flexible social thinking" (*Saying Something* 215). In the essays, or "grooves," that follow, I demonstrate both the global significance of jazz throughout its history and the genre's continued value as both an ethical and aesthetic model for embracing diversity while creating community in a globalized environment – a means of accepting contradictions while freely asserting one's individual voice, as Ellison would have it, both "within *and* against the group" (*Shadow and Act* 234, my emphasis).

Side A

"Outside the Groove of History":

Afro-Cuban Jazz on the Lower Frequencies of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

In her novel *Jazz*, Toni Morrison does not mention the title's musical genre by name even once, but she imbues the text with a musicality such that the novel itself reads like an extended jam session. At one point, while "riffing on" springtime in the City, the narrator contemplates the emergence of the street musicians with the more temperate climate, focusing in on one bluesman in particular: "Blues man. Black and bluesman. Blacktherefore blue man. Everybody knows your name. Where-did-she-go-and-why man. So-lonesome-I-could-die man. Everybody knows your name" (119). Whether these are lyrics sung by the bluesman or are the narrator's lyrical thoughts while observing him is ambiguous, but in either case, Morrison's narrator, in relating the experience, is actively Signifyin(g) on the theme of the "blues man." Signifyin(g), Henry Louis Gates, Jr. demarcates, "*is* repetition and revision, or repetition with a signal difference" (xxiv). In the initial three sentences, in particular, the narrator provides a succinct demonstration of Signifyin(g) on a linguistic level with the repetition and revision of the words black, blue, and man. In the first, she simply identifies the blues and the man, though not necessarily conterminously since they exist as separate words (entities). In the middle phrase, however, the blues and the man merge, and he is identified as black. The final and most striking utterance in the sequence replaces the neutral coordinate conjunction "and" with the causal conjunctive adverb "therefore" and fuses the latter to the word "black" in a similar manner to "blues" and "man," which are here separated – the plural ending severed from "blues," eliciting

both the color and the emotion/state of being. With each revision, minor as it may seem, the meaning, or signal, shifts into something else, culminating in the expression that to be black is, fundamentally, to be blue – abused, bruised, and altogether downtrodden.

Scottish-born author Jackie Kay signifies on these two colors as well, transporting them across national and gender boundaries, in her novel *Trumpet*. While performing, the music allows the protagonist, Joss Moody (born Josephine Moore), to revisit the scene of his birth: "Down there at the bottom, he can see himself when he was a tiny baby, blue in the face. The trumpet takes him back to the blue birth…. [The midwife] scrubs the baby hard and hands the wee black baby back to her mother (132). As with Morrison, Kay employs a chain of Signifyin(g). First, she characterizes the baby as blue ("a tiny baby, blue in the face") from lack of oxygen. Then, the entire birth is codified as blue – the birth of Joss' "blues." Finally, she reveals that the baby, initially described as blue, is in fact black, the two colors so inextricably entwined that they are interchangeable. Joss may elect to change the gender with which he is born, but he cannot escape the colors associated with his birth: black and (therefore) blue.

By Signifyin(g) on the various meanings and implications of the two colors, both Morrison and Kay also signify on Louis Armstrong's "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue." The song, written by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf for the 1929 Broadway musical revue *Hot Chocolates* to be sung by a brown-skinned girl about losing her man to a lighter-skinned woman, [1] was commissioned by white mobster Dutch Schultz who wanted a comic lament about African American adversity (Sundquist 115; Borshuk 214). Armstrong's version, however, does not retain any of the lightheartedness the song presumably had in the theatre; instead, it "was

[1] Notably, the first verse in the theatrical version, not included in Armstrong's rendition, is: "Out in the Street, shufflin' feet,/ Couples passing two by two,/ While here am I, left high and dry,/ Black, and cause I'm black I'm blue" (Sundquist 116), reflecting almost verbatim Morrison's phrase "blacktherefore blue" and reflecting Kay's parallel.

elevated by the power of Armstrong's horn and vocal into a poignant, profoundly moving statement about the brutality of racism" (Berrett 97). In an act of Signifyin(g), Armstrong repeats and revises the tune with a signal difference, transforming it through sardonic irony into a tragic song of the victims – instead of a comic song of the perpetrators – of racial oppression, or, as Eric Sundquist observes, "one of the first overt instances of racial protest in American popular music" (115). The brilliance of the allusion is that Armstrong's musical text has a literary dimension as well, as it plays a prominent role in Ralph Ellison's influential novel *Invisible Man*. Consequently, in Signifyin(g) on Armstrong's song, Morrison and Kay also do so on Ellison's text – itself, in the words of Michael Borshuk, "a Signifyin(g) masterpiece" (91). By transporting it across national and cultural boundaries, Kay also alludes to the transcultural dimension of *Invisible Man* achieved by Ellison's skillful use of a Latin jazz aesthetic.

Ellison composed the novel while musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Kenny Clarke, and Thelonious Monk were forging modern jazz, or bebop, through their improvisational experimentations just up the road at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem. He documents this history-in-the-making by writing boppers into his novel as the agents who "record" the lives of the Harlem residents who are systematically left "outside the groove of history" (443), inspiring the narrator to write his story. In addition to creating entirely new modes of playing, the musicians who shaped bebop were also instrumental in the transculturation of jazz, embracing Cuban folk rhythms and incorporating them into the bop idiom, generating a unique fusion they termed Cubop. As Jason Stanyek observes, "the post-World War II fascination with intercultural collaboration, as a reflexive organizational and creative strategy, emerged full-blown in the revolutionary context of bebop" (117). Ironically, however, since boppers are the "creators" of history in Ellison's novel, when bebop achieved historical status,

the Afro-Cuban influence stayed beyond the borders. Unlike the official history, though, Ellison records the cross-cultural interaction of Cubop in *Invisible Man*, formally mirroring the music by incorporating the rumba rhythm beneath an improvisational jazz aesthetic in the text. As a result, he incorporates a form of jazz which not only transcends boundaries and accepted binaries within an American context but reflects a transnational diasporic culture of people unified by racial prejudice and subordinate power relations lingering from the brutal realities of racial slavery. In *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison offers a prototype for the "jazzed" novel while anticipating the globalization and hybridity characteristic of the latter half of the twentieth century leading up to our current cultural moment, positing the relevance and value of a similarly "jazzed" history and ethics therein – a call to which we, his audience, must respond.

Setting the Stage: "The Spanish Tinge"

Despite the abundant critical attention paid to the role(s) of music in *Invisible Man*, the impact of "the rhythm section" has, somewhat surprisingly, been addressed quite minimally, with the overarching attention devoted to qualities such as improvisation and call-and-response in regard to the "soloists." Beat is a fundamental element in black expressive arts, as reflected in Invisible Man's often quoted description of the unusual temporal effect of his condition and, by extension, that of his "invisible" culture:

> 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. (8)

His notion of a syncopated sense of time aligns with the flexible rhythms of jazz, thereby linking both the novel and its title character with the music while suggesting cultural invisibility is partially responsible for this "different sense of time" in black musical forms, as well. In addition, he implies there is as much meaning in the silences as the beats themselves: "you slip into the breaks and look around." Therefore, like Invisible Man's slippage into the breaks of the city's surface and into Armstrong's song in the prologue, he proposes that, due to their cultural invisibility, black expressive cultures strive to break up "the swift and imperceptible flowing of time" in order to illuminate the "nodes" which disturb the notion of an empirical temporality.

By disrupting the notion of progress in a linear timeline due to the breach caused by racial slavery, Invisible Man reflects Paul Gilroy's call for a reevaluation of the concept of modernity, one which includes black people. In *The Black Atlantic,* Gilroy asserts that the "concepts of modernisation and modernity raise the problem of time and time-consciousness directly if only because the issue of where it might be possible to identify a line between the present and the past which constitute it becomes an integral part of enlightenment understanding of progress and social development" (196). Since racial slavery lies beneath the surface of enlightenment ideology progressing toward "modernity," people of African descent are either relegated to a position of the pre-modern or excluded from the timeline altogether. As *Invisible Man* indicates, though, black musical forms offer a "different sense of time," one which transports Afro-diasporic populations to the forefront. James Baldwin provides a beautiful illustration of this capability of black musical expression: "Music is our witness and our ally. The beat is the confession which recognises, changes, and conquers time. Then history becomes a garment we can wear and share, and not a cloak in which to hide, and time becomes our friend" ("Of the Sorrow Songs: The Cross of Redemption" 12). As with *Invisible Man,* it is the rhythm

section that possesses this power over time, and the syncopated pulse of the once-forbidden drum is its lifeblood.

Gilroy suggests this "swinging" of temporality in black music is the result of certain underlying themes which unite black cultures across national boundaries: "The vigour with which [black music] treats upon the themes of guilt, suffering, and reconciliation…. specifies the boundaries not of continuity but of sameness by introducing a syncopated temporality – a different rhythm of living and being" (202). The notion of syncopation here is key, defined by Gunther Schuller as "a temporary shifting or displacement of a regular metrical accent; the emphasis on a weak or unaccented note so as to displace the regular meter" (382). In highlighting the "unaccented note so as to displace the regular meter," black musical rhythms reflect an attempt to transform the "regular meter" of the dominant culture in order to bring the unaccented notes (themselves) to the forefront. In *Invisible Man*, this "different rhythm of living and being" connects Afro-diasporic cultures across national boundaries, as Gilroy argues it should, through the blending of Afro-Cuban polyrhythms with a jazz aesthetic in the text, acknowledging the long history between the two musical traditions.

Discussing the birth of bebop at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem in his 1958 essay "The Golden Age, Time Past," Ellison laments, "With jazz we are yet not in the age of history, but linger in that of folklore" (*Shadow and Act* 205). As jazz finally entered "the age of history" by the turn of the century, however, several important voices were omitted from the canon in order to create a neat, linear historical narrative intricately connected with that of its country of origin. Indeed, the "foreign" cultural voice most entwined with jazz from its inception – the Latin influence which Jelly Roll Morton famously termed "the Spanish tinge" (Lomax 62) – has also been frequently written out of the historical "records." Morton, in an interview with Alan

Lomax, goes so far as to claim, "In fact, if you can't manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for jazz" (62). Furthermore, since jazz was tied to dance, the bands were paid to incorporate numbers reflecting the current dance crazes, many of which were Latin American styles such as the quadrille, rumba, stomp, and tango (Washburne 411). Since these were novelty numbers typically not included in bands' regular repertoires, though, a Latin sub-category was not needed. "Over time," however, as Christopher Washburne observes, "these specific terms were used with less frequency as jazz became less associated with dance, and by 1946, they were replaced by two broader labels: 'Cubop' and 'Latin Jazz'" (411). The blending of bebop and Afro-Cuban music responsible for the need for these new labels also marked a rejection of the "novelty" status of early Latin-influenced jazz tunes and was an attempt at creating a more organic transcultural musical fusion.

Oscar Hijuelos offers a concise description of the transculturation of these two rich musical traditions in a vibrant footnote to his Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*:

> "Cu-bop" being the term used to describe the fusion of Afro-Cuban music and hot be-bop Harlem jazz. Its greatest practitioners were the bandleader Machito, Maurio Bauza, Chano Pozo, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, who hooked up to create that sound in the late 1940s. The American jazz players picked up the Cuban rhythms, and the Cuban musicians picked up jazzier rhythms and chord progressions. (29)

As Hijeulos observes, the Cubop musicians did not merely appropriate Latin elements into jazz, or vice versa; rather, the two musical traditions fused equally, the musicians both influencing and influenced by the other culture's musical techniques. This cultural reciprocity, as Washburne

notes, is evident in the term "Cubop" as well: "The appellation aptly symbolizes the new equipollent level of cross-cultural musical integration that differentiated the music from previous Latin and jazz mixings (note the equal distribution of letters in this five lettered word, with the two borrowed from each name along with the sharing of the middle letter 'b')" (412). Instead of the acculturation of one musical tradition by the other, they are transculturated, forming a style that contains elements of both but is also unique.

The theory of transculturation itself has particular resonance with the fusion of Cubop, as it was initially presented by Cuban theorist Fernando Ortiz in 1940 "to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk" (98). Ortiz wrests the power and prestige away from the Europeans as "discoverers," asserting instead that the discovery was mutual: "They were two worlds that discovered each other and collided head-on" (100). In Cubop, both the Afro-Cubans and American jazz musicians "discovered each other," as well. Gillespie explains:

> When the Cubans came here, their music was 2/4. Our music was 3/4, 4/4, or cut time. There's a big difference. The Americans couldn't read their music too well, in 2/4 time, when the Cuban bands came up here…. Therefore, they wrote it like it was in 4/4 time for the benefit of these musicians up here, and they destroyed the feeling of the music…. That was the difference and *we* had to become accustomed to the nuances of it. (321, my emphasis)

The reciprocal, of course, is also true. Just as the American musicians had to adjust to the Cuban rhythms, the Cuban percussionists had to learn how to adapt their rhythms to fit the jazz tunes (Gillespie 319), and the Cuban rhythmic pattern "is not maintained to the strictness of Afro-

Cuban standards" (Monson, "Art Blakey's African Diaspora" 341-2). Though Ortiz's study deals primarily with sugar and tobacco, Raúl A. Fernández acknowledges the connection between the theory of transculturation and Cuban musical forms, claiming that "music has been the island's superior export commodity as well, providing outsiders more *sabor*, and a different flavor, than contrapuntal sugar and tobacco" (*From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* 43). Ortiz's theory also encourages the exploration of cultural heritages other than those of the colonizers or slave masters, and the African American musicians involved in Cubop reflect this desire in their burgeoning interest in reconstructing their African roots and culture, a primary motive for exploring such a fusion in the first place (Washburne 420-1).

The generally acknowledged "birth of Cubop" occurred when Dizzy Gillespie added Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo to his big band for a concert at Carnegie Hall on September 29, 1947. According to Fernández, "When… Chano Pozo joined the Dizzy Gillespie band, jazz was changed forever" (10). There was a language barrier, though – Gillespie did not speak Spanish and Pozo spoke no English (Gillespie and Fraser 317). Questioned as to how the two musicians were able to communicate, Gillespie onomatopoeically quotes Pozo's reply, "Deehee no peek pani, me no peek Angli, bo peek African" (318). They both speak African, Pozo asserts, meaning that they shared a common rhythmic language, although it had evolved differently in the respective cultural contexts. According to Gillespie, the beats the African slaves carried to the Americas were polyrhythmic – multiple meters played concurrently over the same pulse. During slavery in the United States, however, the slaves were forbidden drums, so they improvised by clapping or banging tools together. The instrumental and acoustic limitations, as well as the musical influences from their slave masters, inevitably altered their rhythmic patterns.

"We became monorhythmic," Gillespie summarizes, "but the Afro-Cubans, the South Americans, and the West Indians remained polyrhythmic" (318).

For the boppers, as Gillespie's comments elucidate, the incorporation of Cuban rhythms was not just an exploration into Cuban folk musical roots; it was an attempt at discovering their own African heritage. Gillespie recalls his first experience playing with a Cuban percussion section at a benefit for the African Academy of Arts and research: "I found the connections between Afro-Cuban and African music and discovered the identity of our music in theirs" (290). Pozo, in particular, introduced the American jazz musicians to African cultural forms through vocal chants in African languages, playing Afro-Cuban music tied to his Abakwa religious beliefs (a religion of African descent practiced in Cuba), and his use of the conga drum, an instrument which originated in Africa (Washburne 421). In short, as Ingrid Monson observes, Afro-Cuban musical traditions were central "in triangulating between Africa and African America" ("Introduction" 17), reflecting Gilroy's theory of a transnational African diasporic community united through music.

Afro-Cuban jazz represents a unique fusion of two Afro-diasporic musical forms which, although sharing a common source, have undergone different transmutations. It is, to borrow Fernández's term, a "hybrid of hybrids" ("Cuban Musicians and Jazz" 3). While both jazz and Afro-Cuban music involve a fusion of European and African elements, and both contain syncopated rhythms, the different cultural contexts out of which they grew accounts for their recognizable differences. Despite the dissimilarities, though, they both originated in regions where plantation slavery had bloodied the past and continued racism plagued the present. The syncopated rhythm section inherited from Africa, the foundation and (in a sense) "lower"

frequencies, of Afro-Cuban jazz reflects a unity across national boundaries, solidified by what Gilroy terms "the slave sublime" – the unspeakable terrors of racial slavery.

In *The Black Atlantic,* Gilroy outlines two basic modes of political thought which strive toward a utopic society. The first is a politics of fulfillment: "the notion that a future society will be able to realize the social and political promise that present society has left unaccomplished" (37). This utopic vision of political empowerment is, he contends, too simplistic since it reifies racial binaries and stays within the realm of "the merely linguistic, textual, and discursive" (37). Gilroy argues that the appeal for utopia requires instead a politics of transfiguration, which, rather than the desire to merely supplant the repressor in the same repressive system, petitions for the transfiguration of the entire infrastructure. This politics "points specifically to the formation of a community of needs and solidarity which is magically made audible in the music itself and palpable in the social relations of its cultural utility and reproduction" (37). It is not necessarily conveyed in the lyrical content, though, or even the melody. Rather, Gilroy clarifies:

> This politics exists *on a lower frequency* where it is played, danced, and acted, as well as sung and sung about, because words, even words stretched by melisma and supplemented or mutated by the screams which still index the conspicuous power of the slave sublime will never be enough to communicate its unsayable claims of truth. (37, my emphasis)

Likewise, the Cuban rhythms exist "on the lower frequencies" of *Invisible Man*, on which the narrator also suggests he may speak on behalf of the reader, gesturing toward the formation of a similar "community of needs and solidarity" with his audience.

"Ragged Rumba Rhythm"

Mario Bauza, who introduced Pozo to Gillespie, does little to hide his frustration that Afro-Cuban jazz has been excluded from most narratives in a 1988 interview with *SPIN* magazine: "The Cubans, we came here and changed your American music from the bottom up! And nobody knows about this.... NOBODY WRITES ABOUT THIS!" (Palmer 28). The "bottom" to which he refers is the rhythm section, and the change revolves around one rhythmic pattern in particular:

> We made changes from the bottom – the bass, the drums…. Before they started to listen to us in the 1940s, all the American bass players played nothing but dum-dum-dum, 1-2-3-4, 'walking' bass. Then they heard the Cuban *tumbaos* (bass riffs) Cachao was playing, and they started to go da-da-*dat* – stop and rest – da-*dat!* Da-da-*dat* – stop and rest – da-*dat!* And the American drummers, the same. (Palmer 28)

The Cuban rhythm Bauza vocally mimics is the *son*, more commonly known in the United States as the rumba, a beat which is foundational in Cuban music and, hence, the Cubop aesthetic in *Invisible Man.*

The most overt example of the Afro-Cuban influence in the novel occurs when the narrator is packing to leave Mary Rambo's place, where he has been living as a boarder. The other lodgers are protesting the lack of heat by pounding on the walls, but eventually, for the narrator, it becomes something more:

> The knocking had gone beyond mere protest over heatlessness now, they had fallen into a ragged rumba rhythm:
>
> *Knock!*

Knock-knock

Knock-knock!

Knock!

Knock-knock

Knock-knock!

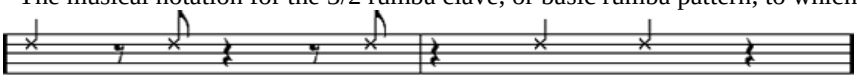
vibrating the very floor. (321)

As the rumba provides a rhythmic structure which unites musicians across national boundaries in Cubop, it unites the diverse boarders in their common frustration in this section. Spread over two bars of musical notation, the basic structure (once through the pattern) is known as a clave.[2] There are two variations of the rumba clave, distinguished by the number of beats in each measure. The 3-2 clave has three beats spaced by intermittent rests in the first measure, followed by two rapid beats in the second. The 2-3, on the other hand, is essentially the inverse – two successive beats in the first measure and three separated by rests in the next (Yanow 1). Ellison's onomatopoeic representation of two continual claves quoted above indicates the rhythm resembles the 3-2 clave, since the first two lines compose the triple beats of the first measure and the final two are together and accented with an exclamation mark.[3] It is not, of course, a perfect representation since there is no space between the middle two beats, but it does recall "a ragged rumba rhythm."

Raúl A. Fernández chronicles the genesis of the rumba as it relates to jazz:

[2] "The clave is the basis for all Cuban music, an offbeat rhythmic pattern over two bars, made originally by the clashing together of two little wooden sticks (also known as claves)" (Yanow 1).

[3] The musical notation for the 3/2 rumba clave, or basic rumba pattern, to which Invisible Man refers is:



Knock! Knock - knock Knock - knock!

> Simultaneous to the development of jazz, the 1920s witnessed the appearance of the musical genre known as the *son*. A fusion of Spanish and African elements, the *son* reached the United States in the early 1930s under the name of rhumba or rumba – an unfortunate nomenclature which has led to much confusion, as *rumba* is the name of a different, drum-based, Afro-Cuban folkloric genre. ("Cuban Musicians and Jazz" 6)

The "unfortunate nomenclature" associated with the label "rumba" for the *son* results from the earlier association of the term "rumba" with a party, or gathering, and then a dance in Cuba (Daniel 17). "The real rumba," according to Gary Stewart, is an event directly associated with Africa and slavery: "[It] had developed in nineteenth century Cuba among slaves from West and central Africa. Several variations evolved, all of which coupled drums and other percussion instruments with call-and-response singing between a leader and chorus" (20). The *son*, on the other hand, as Fernández acknowledges, is (like jazz) more of a cultural hybrid.

Scott Yanow recounts that "Nigerian slaves brought their polyrhythmic chants and drums to the Caribbean Islands. In Cuba the rhythms were combined with the language and song of Spain and the *clave* was developed" (1) Cuba maintained links to Africa via the slave trade for a longer period of time than any other country, during which the instruments and musical styles of Spain comingled with those from various parts of Africa under the brutal banner of slavery. One popular Spanish instrument, in particular, relatively obscure in the rest of Europe, was crucial to the fusion and was combined with the African drum to form the clave: the guitar (Fernández, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* 22-5). "This long, rich, and complex process… led to the powerful and simple description of Cuban music as a marriage between the Spanish guitar and the African drum," Fernández explains. "From this pairing comes a wonderful offspring, the

son" (*From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* 25). The *son* soon became the foundation for virtually all Cuban music and, like jazz, a source of national identity and pride. Consequently, the fusion of Cubop represents a conscious effort to reach across national borders on the part of the Cuban musicians just as it does for those from the United States. These "[t]wo great musical products of the twentieth century, jazz and the Cuban *son*, [merged] in the last half of the twentieth century to produce a fun and dynamic hybrid of hybrids that came to be known as Latin jazz" (Fernández, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* 22).

In addition to referencing the rhythm of the rumba, Invisible Man incorporates it into the structure of his elegiac speech for Tod Clifton as well. Notably, the speech is inspired by a man with "an old, plaintive, masculine voice" (452) who, unprompted, begins singing a spiritual and is soon joined by a euphonium trumpet, the two engaging in a form of call-and-response improvisation with "one catching and rising above the other and the other pursuing" (452). The song is "Many a Thousand Gone," the lyrics to which anticipate release from the bondage of slavery through emancipation or (more likely) death,[4] linking Clifton's murder to continued brutality toward African Americans. Invisible Man notes the emotional sway of the music and its ability to foster community, claiming that "they had touched on something deeper than protest; or religion" (453). Like his experience of the Louis Armstrong song in the prologue, it is "on the lower frequencies" that Invisible Man perceives its power: "It was not the words, for they were the same old slave-borne words; it was as though they had changed the emotion beneath the words while yet the old longing, resigned, transcendent emotion still sounded above, now deepened by something for which the theory of the Brotherhood had given me no name" (453). This "song from the past," situated "outside the groove" of the Brotherhood's scientific

[4] Although it exists in many variations Eric Sundquist records the verses as, respectively: (1) No more auction block for me; (2) No more peck of corn for me; (3) No more driver's lash for me; (4) No more pint of salt for me; and (5) No more mistress' call for me/ Many thousands gone (126).

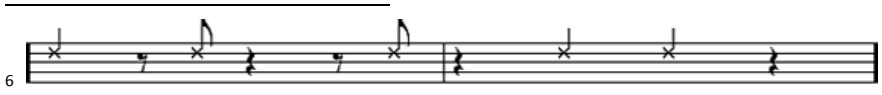
logic, educes memories of the narrator's earlier experiences in the African American church as well as "much suppressed and forgotten anger" (453). He recognizes, however, that the music seems to affect everyone, many of whom do not share his background: "But that was the past, and too many of those now reaching the top of the mountain and spreading massed together had never shared it, and some were born in other lands. Yet all were touched; the song had aroused us all" (453). Given the influx of immigration to Harlem from Cuba and Puerto Rico in the 1930s and 1940s (Washburne 412-13), some of them are likely from Latin America, and Invisible Man reflects this transnational "community of needs and solidarity" united by the emotion of the song in the rhythm of his improvised "sermon on the mount."[5]

The narrator himself suggests that the cadence of the language is important when he relates of the audience members, "They were listening intently, and as though looking not at me, but at the pattern of my voice on the air" (455). While this, on one level, suggests the "invisible" (sound, Clifton as an individual) becoming visible, it also implies that "the pattern" of his voice takes precedence over the words themselves, as noted by John F. Callahan: "What matters more than the words is the rising and falling, fluid pattern of his voice" (77). Callahan, however, only sees the pattern of the melody – rising and falling – overlooking the equally fundamental rhythmic pattern. As aforementioned, the speech is clearly established as a sermon, and Invisible Man displays the dynamics and repetitions of a preacher. Within that framework, though, he incorporates the rhythmic pattern of the rumba. Invisible Man begins the speech with the frequently repeated refrain, "His name was Clifton" (456). While the syllables, of course, align with the five beats in the rumba clave, the phrase also mirrors the structure in that there are three one-syllable words, therefore implying a slight pause, or rest, between words, followed by a two

[5] Invisible Man invites the parallel/parody by claiming before his speech, "There'll be no miracles and there's no one here to preach a sermon" (455), during which he also exclaims, "Listen to me standing on this so-called Mountain!" (457).

syllable word which parallels the final two beats in the clave, quarter notes with no intermittent rest.[6] This phrase is repeated frequently, leading Invisible Man in a different improvisational, or Signifyin(g), direction each time: "His name was Clifton and he was young…"; "His name was Clifton and he was black…"; "His name was Clifton and they shot him…" (456).

A little further into his speech, he uses the same rhythm to explain "the facts" of Clifton's murder: "He fell and he kneeled. He kneeled and he bled. He bled and he died" (456). The parallel structure of five single syllable words makes it more difficult to parse out the precise rhythm, yet the beats align. Furthermore, since Clifton's final condition in each case becomes the initial one in the succeeding phrase, the first two words (he fell; he kneeled; he bled, respectively) would be delivered with only a slight pause between them and leading into the "and," followed by a relatively long pause after the "and" for dramatic effect, and no pause whatsoever between the climactic final two words. As in the rumba clave, the accent would be on the third and fifth beat, since the final word is the new condition and the "and" repeatedly stresses that he has not related the whole extent of the brutality; there is more. Bauza's verbal imitation of the rumba rhythm – "da-da-*dat* – stop and rest – da-*dat!*" – provides a useful model to illustrate the underlying rhythm in Invisible Man's speech: "He fell *and* [– stop and rest –] he *kneeled.* He kneeled *and* [– stop and rest –] he *bled.* He bled *and* [– stop and rest –] he *died.*" Although it is unlikely that Invisible Man would deliver these lines with the precision required in music, one could imagine that, like the upset boarders at Mary's place banging on the walls, the lines resemble "a ragged rumba rhythm" and thus reflect both Afro-Cuban jazz and a transnational black culture.



A likely reason for the critical oversight of Afro-Cuban jazz in relation to *Invisible Man* is that, according to biographer Lawrence Jackson, Ellison disliked both the boppers' rejection of Dixieland jazz and Southern blues, which they saw as degrading, and their substitution of Latin folk culture. "Ellison saw the meshing with the Afro-Cuban rhythm as a strategic mistake," he claims, "indicative of a quintessentially American form of ethical schizophrenia, which black Americans suffered from as fully as their white countrymen did" (Jackson 359). What Jackson terms "ethical schizophrenia" refers to Ellison's perception that Americans tend to search elsewhere (Europe, Asia, Latin America, etc.) for "culture" while neglecting their own artists. Ellison claims in his notebooks, "Beboppers search in Latin America for folk content which [bebop] has rejected in Jazz" (qtd. in Jackson 359). But Ellison, steeped in the British modernist tradition, was not immune to his own diagnosis and recognized that the transculturation of Cubop mirrored his own work: "When he heard boppers playing rhumbas, [Ellison] understood that the music expressed the same cultural impurity and borrowing and free-floating and chaotic blending that in part reflected his own life and artistic approach" (359). Ironically, Ellison sees Afro-Cuban jazz as "inauthentic," a charge frequently leveled against his own work by Black Nationalist thinkers since he drew inspiration from many white writers. Some critics, such as Ernest Kaiser in one of the more inimical attacks, goes so far as to claim that Ellison had "become an establishment writer, an Uncle Tom" (111). Ellison may have perceived Afro-Cuban jazz as "inauthentic," but his recognition of the parallels between Cubop and his writing should encourage the critic to do the same.

Ellison's ambivalence toward Cubop also reflects Invisible Man's throughout the novel, as well as the hesitation to include Latin jazz in the construction of the jazz canon. Washburne argues:

> Latin jazz explicitly invites the participation of other non-African American cultures in jazz, as such possessing a transformational engine feeding off an ambivalence regarding musical and cultural affiliations. In other words, the Latin presence in jazz history complicates the black/white dichotomy of racial politics in the United States jazz scene. (420)

Spatially, Cuba and other Latin American islands of the Caribbean, of course, share a closer proximity to the birthplace of jazz (New Orleans) than does New York, its epicenter by the time of bebop and Cubop. Yet, due to political boundaries and the common struggle of African Americans under segregation, a national perception of jazz with closed borders was maintained as more "authentic" than one which includes the cross-cultural interflow of ideas. Consequently, jazz's "Spanish tinge" has been dismissed due to its perceived "cultural impurity," even though much of the activity occurred in the United States. This is due to the fact that Latin musical forms tend to be considered "foreign," whereas jazz is "indigenous": "The frequent exclusion of [Latin] music from the canon of American music reflects a tradition in national music histories which privilege the local…. Afro-Latino styles, on the other hand, are perceived by many as transplanted urban musics that fall outside the boundaries of the imagined national community" (Fernández, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* 15). With "the politics of authenticity" as one of the central areas of his study, Paul Gilroy reinforces that "authenticity emerges among music makers as a highly charged and bitterly contested issue" (96), an issue that comes to the forefront when approaching Afro-Cuban jazz.

Gilroy situates the exclusion of Latin jazz forms from the canon as part of a more global trend in black Atlantic musical forms:

> The problem of cultural origins and authenticity… has taken on greater proportions as original, local, or folk expressions of black culture have been identified as authentic and positively evaluated for that reason, while subsequent hemispheric or global manifestations of the same cultural forms have been dismissed as inauthentic and therefore lacking in cultural or aesthetic value precisely because of their distance (supposed or actual) from a readily identifiable point of origin. (97)

This point is illustrated via jazz, as Gilroy invokes a rift between Wynton Marsalis and Miles Davis – Marsalis accused Davis' experiments with jazz-rock fusion as inauthentic; Davis responded by condemning Marsalis' return to "traditional" jazz as anachronistic pastiche. Gilroy clearly identifies more with Davis' position, claiming that "the need to project a coherent and stable racial community" evinced in Marsalis' stance "can be said to have taken over its evident appetite for sameness and symmetry from the discourses of the oppressor" (97). In other words, denying the musical transculturation and diversity within the African diaspora and clinging to an imagined notion of "authenticity" leads to the same homogeneous depiction of the racial group as perpetrated by their erstwhile oppressors. By including Afro-Cuban rhythms "on the lower frequencies" of *Invisible Man,* interacting with the "American" soloists, Ellison's artistic approach more closely mirrors that of Davis, although his expressed viewpoint of jazz resonates in Marsalis.

The active interaction between the rhythm and the "lead" section is fundamental both to the transnational interaction inherent in Cubop and my argument that jazz provides an ideal model for interaction in a diverse global community. Monson states that "the interaction between the rhythm section and the soloist has often been likened to a communicative dialogue

between musicians and their audiences" (*Saying Something* 95). Monson's analogue of an antiphonic dialogue between the two sectors is a departure from the common perception of the rhythm section as "background" for the soloist which, given the national dimensions of Cubop, would subordinate the "Cuban" (rhythm) to the "American" (soloist). Monson's assertion, however, places them in a more egalitarian mode of antiphonic communication.

A model for this idyllic relationship between musicians is rendered beautifully in a segment from James Baldwin's short story "Sonny's Blues," at the end of which the pianist Sonny, is jamming with other bebop musicians after a lengthy hiatus:

> Sonny began to play. Something began to happen. And Creole let out the reins. The dry, low, black man said something awful on the drums, Creole answered, and the drums talked back. Then the horn insisted, sweet and high, slightly detached perhaps, and Creole listened, commenting now and then, dry, and driving, beautiful and calm and old. Then they all came together again, and Sonny was part of a family again. (46)

In Cubop, this (ideally) familial relationship between musicians takes on an added dimension given the transnational associations of the respective sections, affording a model for more mutual interaction in a diverse global community. This is supported by the interaction between these two sections in Afro-Cuban music: "Melody instruments in the *son* contribute to its dance aesthetic, with an emphasis on rhythmic drive as opposed to harmonic complexity" (Fernández, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* 32). The beboppers, who increased the harmonic complexity of jazz by exploring higher intervals between notes and unconventional harmonies, retained this more unified relationship with the rhythm section in Cubop, facilitating a transcultural musical flow between the respective sections. By aligning the relationship between

rhythm section and soloist with that of musician and audience, Monson breaks down the traditionally hierarchical division between the latter pairing as well. Just as Cubop erodes national borders by establishing an egalitarian antiphonic exchange between "Cuban" rhythms and "American" jazz, Ellison moves toward a similar feat on a literary level by transcending the "border" between author/narrator and reader, from whom he seeks an ethical response.

A Call to the Reader

Although *Invisible Man* and its title character have been occasionally faulted for what some critics deem a lack of overt political activism, A. Timothy Spaulding contends that "Ellison's novel stands as both an explicit critique of the racist ideology ingrained in post-WWI America and a work of art that transcends the artistic limitations and didacticism of such a critique" (484). Spaulding likens the narrator's state of "hibernation" to the jazz artist's state of "woodshedding," "a term that describes the process of sequestering oneself from public performance for the purpose of developing one's improvisational skills" (497). For Spaulding, "The invisible man's experiences throughout the novel involve the systematic and, in many ways unrelenting, dismantling of both his public and private persona. His retreat underground represents the culmination of this traumatic experience and his submission to the process of rejuvenation" (497). It is a state of rehearsal in preparation for a better future performance. The notion of woodshedding has particular resonances for African Americans under enforced segregation, and as Eric Sundquist notes, "Ellison explores both the meaning of black invisibility in white America and, in counterpoint, the vital culture of African Americans that might have been circumscribed but was far from extinguished by segregation" (3). As a culture that thrived and developed largely beyond the purview of the white establishment, they were "well-rehearsed" when legal segregation was finally abolished. The experimentations of the narrator

and the boppers with a transnational jazz aesthetic, a cultural hybridity which has remained largely "invisible" until recently, also reflects a form of woodshedding for subsequent transculturated musical forms and future attempts to explore both unity and heterogeneity within diasporic identity. As Jason Stanyek acknowledges, the cross-cultural fusion of Cubop "not only activated a distinct lineage of pan-African music making but can also be seen as one of the germinal moments in the history of intercultural music making of the second half of the twentieth century" (Stanyek 88).

Invisible Man reinforces that he is "woodshedding" through his definition of hibernation in the prelude: "Hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action" (13). Invisible Man's hibernation allows him to "compose" the novel, yet he believes he has failed since, in the very act of composing and recording it on paper, he has inevitably lost some of the emotion: "The very act of trying to put it all down has confused me and negated some of the anger and the bitterness" (579). Hence, although Invisible Man retains a jazz aesthetic and utilizes many black musical forms and techniques in his narrative, he reinforces Gilroy's notion that linguistic signification is perhaps less effective at expressing his ineffable experience than "the structures of feeling" which foster a transnational diasporic community on the lower frequencies of black music.

This sentiment is echoed in the ultimate paragraph of Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, in which the narrator acknowledges, "I can't say that aloud…. If I were able I'd say it. Say make me. Remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now" (229). First, the narrator highlights the fact that the written text is ineluctably inaudible; it is confined to silence and is therefore, on one level, the antithesis of music. Yet, the narrator proclaims the reader has the power to give voice and meaning to the

narrative, thus reversing the popular notion of the reader as subordinate to the author. Indeed, this final statement intimates that the narrator and reader share an intimate relationship, since the reader's hands are inevitably holding and caressing the book. This avowal, with its evocations of sexual relations, recalls the similar liaison between musician and listener, in which the musical vibrations physically penetrate the ear. Morrison's narrator, however, implies that it falls in the hands of the reader, both physically and metaphorically, to bring the inaudible – the unwritten history – to the audible, or, in other words, to respond to her call. Likewise, Ellison's narrator requests an antiphonic response from his readers at the end of *Invisible Man* to make the "invisible" visible.

First, he anticipates the reader's critical review, "'Ah,' I can hear you say, 'so it was all a build-up to bore us with this buggy jiving. He only wanted us to listen to him rave!'" (581). Notably, the reader is referred to in the plural "us," implying a communal reading experience more akin to the audience of a musical performance. Furthermore, "jiving" here is used in its original slang sense, as in the title of Louis Armstrong's 1928 record with his Hot Seven, "Don't Jive Me," meaning "to mislead, to deceive, to 'kid'; to taunt or sneer at" (*OED*); but it also has the later connotations as synonymous with jazz itself, especially "a type of fast, lively jazz; 'swing'" (*OED*), emphasizing that in "jiving" he has effectually been "jazzing" throughout the novel. And, as in Cubop, the rumba clave provides the backbeat.

Invisible Man also acknowledges the limitations of the written text: "Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do?" (581). As Morrison's narrator concedes at the end of *Jazz* that she "can't say that aloud," Ellison's here accepts that, while invisible in the novel, having written the text he is also "a disembodied voice," as his words will continue to exist apart from him. This is informed by Ellison's declaration that

"[o]nce introduced into society, the work of art begins to pulsate with those meanings, emotions, and ideas *brought to it by its audience* and over which the artist has but limited control" (*Shadow and Act* 38, my emphasis). Not only does this highlight that a work of art, when released to the public, takes on a life of its own, but it also accentuates the role of the audience, or reader, in establishing its meaning. The next question more overtly breaks the barrier between author and reader by employing the second person possessive pronoun "your": "What else but try to tell you what was really happening while your eyes were looking through?" (581). By directly invoking the reader, Invisible Man deposits some of the responsibility for his invisibility on his audience.

It is the final question, though, which ultimately links the narrator and the reader, demolishing any remaining barriers: "Who knows but on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?" (581). Significantly, this final sentence is a question and not a statement, as it could be. If it were to end in a period, it would suggest Invisible Man is merely pondering the possibility, but as a question, it requires a response. In addition, it signals a shift of emphasis from the story of the protagonist to that of the reader. After all, the first word of the novel is "I" ("I am an invisible man") and the final one is "you." Given the parallel structure of the concluding independent clause ("I speak for you"), everything in between represents speech – "a jived-up transitional language full of country glamour" (441) like that of the boppers in the novel. This, of course, relates to the emphasis on "talking" in jazz, both between musicians *and* between musicians and their audience. "In the life of actual speech," Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us, "every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood in its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged with the response" (282). Likewise, Ellison seeks not just an emotional connection with his audience, but understanding though an active response.

Turnaround

As we find ourselves in an increasingly postnational, hybridized global community, Ellison's model of jazz's potential for resistance and ability to transcend national and ideological boundaries and accepted binaries remains as pertinent as ever. For, as the narrator reminds us in "Sonny's Blues":

> While the tale of how we suffer is never new, it must always be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness.
>
> And this tale, according to that face, that body, those strong hands on those strings, has another aspect in every country, and a new depth in every generation. (47)

In exploring the musical qualities of the novel, I have proposed that Cuban rhythms exist "on the lower frequencies" of *Invisible Man*. It is also on these frequencies that the narrator attempts to create a "community of needs and solidarity" with his audience, asking us to identify with or take responsibility for his invisibility and respond by playing a more socially responsible role. This community is ever-expanding since, as Homi Bhabha notes, "the very concept of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or 'organic' ethnic communities – *as grounds of cultural comparativism* – are in a profound sense of redefinition" (7). Or, as Paul Gilroy puts it, "the globalisation of vernacular forms means that our understanding of antiphony will have to change. The calls and responses no longer converge in tidy patterns of secret ethnically encoded dialogue" (110). By incorporating the transcultural musical fusion of Cubop in *Invisible Man*, Ellison is ahead of his time in demolishing simplistic binaries and employing a more flexible conception of antiphony, one

which is truly “jazz-shaped”: a threat to totalizing ideologies by allowing for a diversity of voices.

Side B

A Wee Jazz Shindig:

Bebop, Klook-Mops, and Musical Transculturation in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*

In the prologue of *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison has his narrator grooving to Louis Armstrong's recording of "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue," but he initially intended to reach even further back into jazz history, into the realm of legend, and have him listen instead to the unrecorded Charles "Buddy" Bolden (Yaffe 66-7). Although Ellison's editor ultimately suggested the substitution of Armstrong for Bolden, opting for a more accessible reference, the early jazz cornet player would not avoid novelization for long. Two decades later, Michael Ondaatje published the poetic novel *Coming Through Slaughter* with Bolden as its protagonist. Consequently, instead of being fictionalized by an African American writer living in the United States, he became the subject of a novel by a transnational author with an entirely different background. Born in Sri Lanka, educated in England, and living his adult life in Canada (Spinks 1-3), Ondaatje has a rich array of cultural backgrounds from which to draw. Yet, like *The Complete Works of Billy the Kid* before it, *Coming Through Slaughter* is about an American "legend" situated in the United States. As a result, Ondaatje both acknowledges the international influence of jazz and brazenly refutes the concept of a monolithic national identity.

Ondaatje became intrigued with Bolden "when he came across a cryptic newspaper reference: 'Buddy Bolden, who became a legend when he went berserk in a parade'" (Witten 9). Referencing this article in one of the most overtly metafictional instances in the novel, he ponders the profound impact it had on him: "Why did my senses stop at you? There was the

sentence, 'Buddy Bolden who became a legend when he went berserk in a parade…' What was there in that? Before I knew your nation your colour your age that made me push my arm forward and spill it through the front of your mirror and clutch myself?" (134). To his bewilderment, he reveals an identification with the musician not contingent upon a shared national or racial identity. Ondaatje later confesses more directly that he is projecting himself onto the character of Bolden in the novel: "Did not want to pose in your accent but think in your brain and body" (134). As evinced by the formal qualities of the book, then, thinking in Bolden's brain and body leads to an aesthetic resembling the musical idiom the cornet player is credited with inventing: jazz.

By adopting the story of Buddy Bolden and projecting himself onto the protagonist in a literary jazz "groove," Ondaatje offers an early international response to American jazz and the novels it has inspired in its country of origin. In an interview with Maya Jaggi, he says of jazz, "It is the [art form] I envy the most. If I could be Fats Waller, I wouldn't be writing. What I love is its communal form, how it's completely free and improvisational and still everything is held together" (260). In *Coming Through Slaughter*, Ondaatje reflects this formal analysis of jazz, demonstrating its aesthetic value for negotiating a more liberated conception of identity by subverting the boundary between self and Other across national, racial, and temporal borders. Consequently, he sets a precedent for future "jazz novels" from outside the United States to follow, one of the most notable of which is Jackie Kay's *Trumpet.*

Like Ondaatje, Kay is a an established poet who bases her debut novel on an American jazz musician (Billy Tipton, in her case) and utilizes a jazz aesthetic in telling his story. Whereas Ondaatje retains the name and location of the musician about whom he writes, however, Kay renames and relocates her subject, fostering a more explicit critique of specific issues relevant to

her cultural moment and demonstrating more robustly the value of jazz in a globalized world. With a Nigerian father and Scottish mother, Kay – an adopted, black, lesbian, single-mother from Scotland living in England – is fundamentally concerned with identity and belonging. Music, for her, represents both a means of embracing apparent contradictions and deconstructing totalizing binaries, as expressed in an interview: "When music moves you, it strips you bare, beyond being a boy or a girl, black or white, gay or straight, old or young. The music contains so many contradictions, and it doesn't have rigid boundaries, so it is very freeing" (Stuart 8). African American musical forms, in particular, provide an aesthetic model through which Kay is able to merge her very different heritages. Speaking of the influence of music in her work (both poetry and fiction), Kay claims, "[I]t seemed to me, because of being black and Scottish, that the blues and jazz would be a way of being black and being Scottish at the same time in words, because that's quite difficult to find, so I wasn't just being like another white Scottish writer" ("Jackie Kay Interviewed"). Jazz offers a medium through which Kay is able to incorporate blackness into Scottish identity, assert Scottish identity within and against that of the "United Kingdom," proclaim "UK" blackness against the ubiquitous image of black American identity, and claim membership in the transnational African diaspora. By combining her Scottish heritage with the jazz idiom, Kay creates a fusion similar to that she acknowledges in her poetry: "I see that my poetry is influenced by jazz and blues, as well as by Celtic folk songs and music. Lots of rhythms and repetitions that are in my poetry are closely related to music and come out of musical traditions. So, it's two, quite distinct, but, to me, connected traditions" ("Interview with Jackie Kay"). Although *Trumpet* represents a shift for Kay from poetry to prose, this musical transculturation remains evident in the rhythms and repetitions of the novel.

In this chapter, I argue that Jackie Kay finds a model for a less rigid conception of personal and national identity in the more fluid rhythms of bebop and a prototype for Joss Moody in the subgenre's founding trumpeter, Dizzy Gillespie. Thus, she reciprocates Ellison's use of Cuban rhythms beneath a distinctly American voice in *Invisible Man* by incorporating American jazz rhythms beneath a uniquely Scottish voice in *Trumpet*. Like *Invisible Man* and *Jazz, Trumpet* also shifts the emphasis and agency toward the reader at the novel's end, requiring active "listening" and an antiphonic response through more ethical actions beyond the world of the text. By adopting American jazz and musicians who compose/perform it to Europe and blending them with Scottish folk traditions, Kay more fully realizes jazz's ability to transcend national and ideological boundaries.

Bridge

American jazz pianist Billy Tipton is merely one of a pantheon of artists who have enjoyed more fame in death than in life. What sets him apart from most, however, is that his fame has little to do with his art and everything to do with the circumstances of his death. Born as Dorothy Tipton in 1914 but rebirthed as Billy in 1933, the 18-year-old Dorothy disappeared for the next fifty-five years. In what seems an incredible feat, Billy was able to pass as male for the remainder of his life, marrying six times and adopting three sons. He even managed to keep the secret from some of his wives and sons throughout his lifetime. It was not until his death in January 1989 that the performance ended and was revealed as such, inviting worldwide media attention (Middlebrook 3-12). It was this influx of sensationalist media that inspired Kay to compose *Trumpet*: "I read a short news piece about Billy Tipton which intrigued me. His adopted son was quoted as saying, 'He'll always be Daddy to me,' after discovering his father

had been a woman. I was interested in the son's acceptance of his father's construction of his identity" ("An Interview with Jackie Kay"). Although Kay claims to have been stirred to write the novel by the life (or, more accurately, death) of Tipton, it is not a biography. Rather, utilizing the musical aesthetic to which Tipton devoted his career, she treats the late musician's life as a chorus on which to improvise and, like any true jazz artist, translates it into her own "voice." Instead of writing about a white American jazz artist living in Spokane, Washington, she creates Joss Moody, née Josephine Moore, a black Scottish jazz musician residing in London.

Given that Scotland is not particularly known for its jazz scene, Joss' son, Colman, does not understand his father's obsession with black American music and culture:

> All the black guys his father loved to talk about were American, black Americans. Black Yanks, Colman would say. You spend your whole time worshipping black Yanks: Martin Luther King, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Miles Davis. Black Yanks all of them. You are not American, are you? (192)

When Colman answers his own question, however, he reveals the seeming contradiction that, rather than attempting to be "American," Joss actually embraces his Scottish heritage: "No, that's right, you're Scottish, aren't you? Proud to be Scottish. Why don't you get a kilt and play your horn in a kilt? The jazz world would love that" (192). What he fails to understand until later in the novel, though, is that jazz provides a means through which his father is able to embrace elements of his Scottish heritage while maintaining ties to the Afro-diasporic community, a function of black American music for the novel's author, as well.

In her 1993 poetry collection, *Other Lovers*, Kay presents a series of poems about fellow-adoptee Bessie Smith, demonstrating her passion for the American blues tradition. The speaker in "The Red Graveyard" describes the significance of first seeing the singer's face on a record cover: "I pick up the cover and my fingers are all over her face/ Her black face. Her magnificent black face" (13). For Kay, Bessie Smith and other blues/jazz musicians provide her with a vital connection to a larger black community in predominantly white Scotland. The speaker's experience in the poem is autobiographical, as Kay relates in *Bessie Smith*, a biography of the singer: "So the first time I *saw* Bessie Smith, it really was like finding a friend. I saw her before I heard her…. I remember taking the album off [my father] and pouring over it, examining it for every detail. Her image on the cover captivated me" (9, my emphasis). Notably, Kay's initial connection with the blues singer at age twelve had more to do with Smith's physical appearance than her voice, owing to the fact that she "never saw another black person" (9) in her community.

Kay depicts the absence of blackness in Scottish (and British) identity in a frequently-told anecdote:

> I went to sit down in this chair in a London pub and this woman says, "You cannae sit doon – that's ma chair." I said, "Oh, you're from Glasgow aren't you?" And she said, "Aye, how did you know that?" I said, "I'm from Glasgow myself." She said, "You're not, are you, you foreign looking bugger?"… I still have Scottish people asking me where I am from. They won't actually hear my voice, because they are so busy looking at my face. (Brooks 34)

Like Joss, Kay left Scotland for England but maintains affection for her home, claiming she was tired of having to assert herself as a black person in Glasgow. "There is a funny thing when

people accept you and don't accept you," she explains. "I love the country, but I don't know if the country loves me" (Brooks 34). To cope with such alienation, Kay had to find role models from other countries: "I did not think that Bessie Smith only belonged to African Americans or that Nelson Mandela belonged to South Africans. I could not think like that because I knew then of no black Scottish heroes that I could claim for my own. I reached out and claimed Bessie" (*Bessie Smith* 15). By identifying with Bessie Smith and other blues/jazz musicians, Kay reflects Paul Gilroy's theories of a transnational black Atlantic community united through expressive arts (especially music) inherited from Africa, a theme she tackles in *Trumpet*.

Joss' widow, Millie, elaborates on her late husband's connection to the African diaspora, demonstrating the integral function of "Africa" in the collective imagination of diaspora blacks, as she discusses Joss' first hit song, "Fantasy Africa":

> We never actually got to go to Africa. Joss had built up such a strong imaginary landscape within himself that he said it would affect his music to go to the real Africa. Every black person has a fantasy Africa, he'd say. Black British people, black Americans, black Caribbeans. They all have a fantasy Africa. It is all in the head. (34)

In this, Africa serves a similar function for Joss and his playing as India does for Salman Rushdie and his writing, as expressed in the essay "Imaginary Homelands": "If [Indian writers living abroad] do look back, we must do so in the knowledge… that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (10). Although Joss had never been to Africa whereas Rushdie has memories of India, both examples demonstrate the importance of an "imaginary homeland" from which diasporic peoples may draw a sense of identity and artistic inspiration. Alan Rice discerns, "In the context of a

fractured diaspora, such willed invention is essential in order to reconstruct a genealogy that underpins identity" (145). For Kay, as for Joss, music provides a crucial link the larger community of the African diaspora: "[B]ecause I didn't have access to being able to write in say...or wasn't confident enough to write in Caribbean voices or African voices, then it seemed that music was a lovely bridge for that" ("Jackie Kay Interviewed"). Indeed, the metaphor of a bridge is pertinent since jazz provides a transnational connection for Kay across the black Atlantic and a medium through which to add her uniquely Scottish vernacular to the diverse yet united "chorus" of the African diaspora.

Like Ondaatje in *Coming Through Slaughter*, Kay utilizes a jazz aesthetic in *Trumpet*, telling the story from multiple perspectives which form the unity of the whole. Kay explains, "There's a solo, with improvisations by people; one refrain made to play different ways. Jazz is fascinating, because it's always fluid, it has the past in it – work songs, slave songs, blues – jazz is a process of reinventing itself" (Jaggi, "Race and all that jazz" 10). While Millie, Colman, and others who knew Joss well are some of the primary voices in the telling of the late trumpeter's story, others include people who did not know him during his life but play a large role in the controversy surrounding his death, such as the doctor, funeral director, registrar, and a greedy biographer named Sophie Stones. Consequently, Kay allows for many diverse interpretations of the "one refrain" – the life of Joss Moody in light of the posthumous revelation he was a biological woman. As with Ondaatje's treatment of Bolden, Kay also mirrors the Signifyin(g) sensibility of jazz by taking the "refrain" of an American jazz musician and putting it into her own voice, recalling Mikhail Bakhtin's observation of "the word" in living dialogue:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with his [*sic*] own intention, his own accent, when he

> appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation… it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, in other people's intentions. (293-4)

In *Trumpet*, Kay takes "the word" of Billy Tipton's life and populates it with her own accent, context, and authorial intentions, adding racial and national identity issues to those of gender and sexuality.

"Ambivalent Form": C = B-flat

In addition to altering Tipton's name, nationality, and race, Kay also changes his instrument from the piano to the trumpet – a strategic choice, of course, since it is the novel's title as well. In the section entitled "Money Pages," Sophie Stones, the voracious tabloid writer intent on capitalizing on Joss' story, discusses the importance of a good title: "A headline is only around for a day, but a title's permanent like a hair dye" (125). Although Kay's portrayal of Joss is nothing like the exploitative biography Sophie is planning to write, on a metafictional level Sophie's declaration also highlights the significance of the novel's title. Kay claims in an interview, "I liked all the different meanings of trumpet. The idea of the instrument and the sound and the idea of Joss announcing himself, Joss blowing his own trumpet. The journalist trying to trumpet her story. An animal or a bird can make the sound of a trumpet, a clear penetrating note" (An Interview with Jackie Kay). While Kay illuminates some underlying interpretations of the trumpet in this interview, however, there are others she does not explicitly mention, most notably its phallic qualities.

Tracy Hargreaves, in her Freudian reading of the novel, proclaims that "the trumpet is clearly fetishized as the phallus that Joss possesses, Colman desires, and Millie prohibits" (8),

with the Freudian fetishized object as a substitute for the woman's penis. In addition to the overt masculine qualities which Hargreaves discerns, though, the instrument also contains "hidden" feminine characteristics. Tomás Monterrey describes this doubleness as "ambivalent form" (172), making it an ideal metaphor for Joss' identity:

> When Joss plays it, the combination of the character and the instrument grants Joss wholeness, as if the phallic trumpet physically compensates for his absence of male sexual members. A trumpet has a concave end, combining the masculine and the feminine in its form, like Joss's appearance which, being a woman, nobody could ever see anything but the man. (Monterrey 172).[7]

Like Joss, the trumpet is androgynous, but the feminine qualities exist in the negative space, overlooked because of the more accentuated masculine guise.

In addition to the trumpet's form, there is ambivalence regarding the classification of its notes, as well. As a B-flat instrument,[8] the note of C on a trumpet has a concert pitch (as played on a piano) of B-flat. Consequently, when jazz trumpeters speak of reaching high C (or above), which is often used as a threshold note to demonstrate one's range in the upper register, they are referring to a concert pitch of B-flat. This distinction has particular resonance for Joss since C is a "natural" note (not a sharp or flat) and B-flat is an "accidental." Joss is repeatedly aligned with the trumpet note/key of C (the only note specifically mentioned in his playing is C, and he has a record entitled *Blues in a Wild C*). Therefore, just as a trumpet player's written C is heard as a B-flat by an outsider using concert pitch as the "normative" criterion by which to label tones,

[7] Leon Forrest notes the feminine qualities of the trumpet as well, in light of the narrator's identification with Louis Armstrong at the end of *Invisible Man*: "Without the liberating bad air, that riffs through the chamber of the good-bad horn of plenty (which also resembles the chamber from whence all life emerges, you can't have the real music of life, nor the dance" (71)

[8] Although C trumpets exist, they are less common, primarily used for orchestral purposes, and their use is almost unheard of in jazz, virtually guaranteeing that Joss would play a B-flat trumpet.

Joss' performed gender as male is "natural" to him (and everyone else while he is living). But when revealed as a performance, it is seen by outsiders as unnatural by the accepted standards. In other words, the C becomes a B-flat, although the actual pitch has not changed.

The ambivalence of both the trumpet's form and its notes eschew simplistic classifications, but as with gender, they are typically forced into either one or the other category. This is also the case with Joss, as reflected most clearly with the complications surrounding the sex column on the death certificate. The doctor who fills out the form unquestioningly writes "male" in the blank space next to "sex," but upon witnessing Joss' anatomy she violently obliterates the term and ascribes "female" in its place with her "emergency red pen" (44), as though correcting a dissonant note. Then, as if the distinction between the two "notes" is not obvious enough, "she crosse[s] that out, tutting to herself, and print[s] female in large childish letters" (44).

William Holding, the funeral director, reflects the doctor's binary logic in his response after undressing Joss: "He didn't mean to but he happened to glance quickly at the face. It gave him quite a turn. The face had transformed. It looked more round, more womanly. It was without question a woman's face" (110). Upon realizing the C is actually a B-flat by conventional standards, he wonders how he could have ever heard it as a C. He does not, nonetheless, allow for them both to occupy the same space simultaneously; they must conform to the normative binary. When he dresses Joss again, the C returns, and the B-flat becomes inconceivable: "[Joss] persuaded him, even dead, that he was a man, once he had his clothes on" (115). Unlike the doctor, however, there is a suggestion that the experience has started to broaden Holden's perception of gender differences, perhaps leading to a more malleable understanding: "[H]e has been thinking about men and women. The differences between them.

It never occurred to him to think of those differences before, except of course those obvious ones that he is confronted with every working day in his life" (108). By presenting a touching portrait of the complexities of Joss' life, Kay encourages the reader to reconsider those differences as well.

Kay acknowledges the link between a more malleable perception of identity and a jazz aesthetic while discussing her infatuation with the music: "I think that jazz is fascinating because it's also very fluid, and identity within jazz is very fluid" (Jaggi 55). In *Trumpet,* the interrelation between jazz and identity is highlighted in the section "Music," strategically placed in the middle of the text, which demonstrates the music's ability to allow Joss to escape the arbitrary categories superimposed upon him, particularly gender, race, and nationality. Told from the perspective of the omniscient narrator, we learn that "[w]hen Joss gets down, and he doesn't always get down deep enough, he loses his sex, his race, his memory. He strips himself bare, takes everything off, till he's barely human" (131). Since the novel as a whole resembles a jazz composition, with multiple voices improvising on the theme of Joss' death, "Music," not surprisingly, displays the highest level of virtuoso "playing." Whereas the majority of the other songs mentioned, played, or sung in the text (Scottish ballads aside) are from the big band or Broadway tradition (George and Ira Gershwin, Fats Waller and Andy Razaf, etc.), this "solo" resembles bebop, the "modern" jazz of the 1940s and 50s, and Kay finds inspiration for Joss in the trumpeter largely responsible for its development, Dizzy Gillespie.

"O-bop-she-bam": Dizzy, Klook, and Bebop

In August 2008, 83-year-old saxophonist James Moody led Dizzy Gillespie's All-Stars, a jazz band continuing the late trumpet player's legacy, in a concert at The Hub in Edinburgh,

Scotland (Adams). Moody, who first earned a spot playing with Gillespie in his seminal bebop big band in 1946 and later played in Gillespie's sextet and United Nations Orchestra, remained a close personal friend for the rest of his life. During a television show celebrating the trumpeter's seventieth birthday, Gillespie paid Moody the ultimate musical complement: "Playing with James Moody is like playing with a continuation of myself" (Feather and Gitler 474). The musical and personal synergy between Dizzy Gillespie and James Moody is reflected in the character of Joss Moody in *Trumpet.* Kay adopts Moody's name for her imagined characterization of Tipton, but it is Gillespie who provides the musical inspiration. Aside from being the founding trumpeter of modern jazz, or bebop, there are other distinctions which make Gillespie an ideal musical prototype for Joss: he was instrumental in the internationalization and transculturation of jazz; he played a uniquely bent trumpet; and he has a deeply Gaelic surname.

The most overt clue to the influence of Gillespie (and bebop) on Joss is the repeated scat line "O-bop-she-bam" (131;132). On a stylistic level, Kay's use of scat is significant in her project of destabilizing constricting labels since it disrupts the binary between instrumental music and referential lyrics. As John Gennari observes, scat is analogous with several other techniques in subverting standard written representation, be it musical notation or written language:

> The blue notes, microtones, polyrhythms, and extended harmonies of jazz constitute a musical vocabulary and grammar that cannot be accurately represented by the standard notational systems of Western music. Likewise, scat singing dissents from the logocentric tyranny of standard English, eschews referential lyrics in favor of vocalized sound… whose meaning is their own sound. (449-50)

With the phrase "O-bop-she-bam," then, Kay achieves the literary equivalent of scat singing, eschewing conventional prose "in favor of vocalized sound." Like the sounds in scat singing, however, the phrase contains meaning on the syntactical level, its "own sound," enabling the reader to draw various audible comparisons. Brent Hayes Edwards supports Genarri's argument that there is "meaning" in scat singing by asserting that, while often defined as the singing of nonsense syllables,[9] scat "does carry semantic content, though not necessarily linguistic content" (622).

In *Stomping the Blues,* Albert Murray also acknowledges the instrument-like quality of the scat singing voice and suggests that the reverse is characteristic of the blues idiom as well: "The tonal nuances of blues music are a matter of singers playing with their voices as if performing on an instrument, and of instrumentalists using their brasses, woodwinds, strings, keyboards, and percussion as extensions of the human voice" (108-14). This assertion, termed by Murray "reciprocal 'voicing'" (114), is perhaps most obviously reflected in John Coltrane's "Psalm," Part IV of *A Love Supreme* (1965). Coltrane, who also played a major role in the bebop scene, blows the "lyrics" through his saxophone in an inversion to scat singing. Kay also supports Murray's classification in her depiction of Bessie Smith's singing in her poem "The Same Note": "Every note she sang, she bent her voice to her will;/her voice was a wood instrument or a wind one" (*Other Lovers* 12). To apply Murray's theory of "reciprocal 'voicing'" literarily, then, suggests that if Kay uses the musically onomatopoeic "O-bop-she-bam" to evoke syntactic meaning, her prose, or "voice," would be used musically, like that of Smith, "as if performing on an instrument." This hypothesis is indeed supported in the structure, rhythm, and dynamics of the text, especially in "Music."

[9] It is defined, for example, in the glossary of Schuller's *Early Jazz* as "[a] manner of singing employing nonsense syllables" (381).

In addition to the syntactic meaning drawn from the onomatopoeic interpretations of the phrase, "O-bop-she-bam" is a rich intertextual allusion to the title/scat chorus of the Gillespie tune "Oop Bop Sh'bam." In the latter, co-written with Gil Fuller and first recorded on May 15, 1946 by Gillespie's sextet, the refrain "oop-bop-sh'bam" is sung by the entire band, to which Gillespie answers "a-klook-a-mop."[10] Without knowledge of jazz idioms and nicknames, these sets of "lyrics" seem "just" scat, lacking any linguistic referents. But that is not entirely the case. While the first line, or call, is scat (though no doubt capitalizing on the popularity of the word "bop"), the response is both scat and linguistic Signifyin(g). On the most basic level, the latter is a vocal imitation of Kenny "Klook" Clarke's accentuated offbeats on the bass drum (hence, scat), but by the time the song was written, klook-mop had entered the jazz vernacular as an idiomatic expression.

The term comes from Clarke's previous bandleader, Teddy Hill, who did not approve of the drummer's irregular "bombs" on the bass drum which he mimicked onomatopoeically, calling them "klook-mops." Hill's derisive moniker for Clarke's percussive experiments unwittingly provided the temporary epithet for bebop music and the permanent nickname for the drummer he fired (Hennessey 28-9). Gillespie, who also played in Teddy Hill's orchestra, expands on the importance of the drummer's rhythmic contributions to the development of bebop in his autobiography *To Be, or not… to Bop*: "Kenny was modifying the concept of rhythm in jazz, making it a much *more fluid* thing, and changing the entire role of the drummer, from just a man who kept time for dancers to a true accompanist who provided accents for soloists and constant inspiration to the band as a whole" (98, my emphasis). Not only did Clarke

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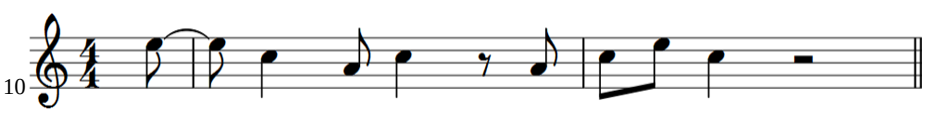


change the way the drums were played, in other words, but he also changed the drummer's position in the group by blurring the line between "lead" and "rhythm" sections: "Kenny initiated a new language into the mainstream of jazz drumming…. He infused a new conception, a new language into the dialogue of the drum, which is now *the* dialogue (Gillespie and Fraser 98). By responding to the scat call, "Oop bop sh'bam" with "a-klook-a-mop," then, Gillespie pays homage to both the emerging style of jazz and the drummer responsible for its unique rhythm. Consequently, Kay's allusion to Clarke's "more fluid" rhythmic technique in "Oop Bop Sh'bam," and bebop as a whole, provide her with a jazz aesthetic which more explicitly mirrors her move toward a less rigid conception of identity.

"Oop Bop Sh'bam," like many bebop songs, signifies on a popular standard from the swing era –George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm." Gillespie and Fuller take the basic structure and re-voice it in the bop idiom, as noted by Stuart Nicholson: "The words 'Oo-Bop-Sh'Bam-a-Klook-a-Mop' cover the first two bars of 'I Got Rhythm,' corresponding with the lyrics 'I got rhythm,' illustrating just how different bop's fragmented rhythmic line was from swing" (96-7). In addition to altering the rhythm of the melody of the earlier standard, the composers re-harmonize the tune as well, adding twice the chords and making the changes more frequent. Rather than two chords over the melody "I got rhythm," for example, there are four, and the eight which underlay the verse section beginning with the lyrics "Old man trouble" are doubled to sixteen, as well (Nicholson 97). The narrator reflects these rapid changes with the short, choppy sentences and the frequently repeated refrain "running changes" which leads in various improvisational directions. Although the phrase has several layers of meaning in regard to the many facets of Joss' identity, on a musical level it reinforces the frequency of the chord changes over which he is playing. As Nicholson observes, though, it is not just the extended harmonies

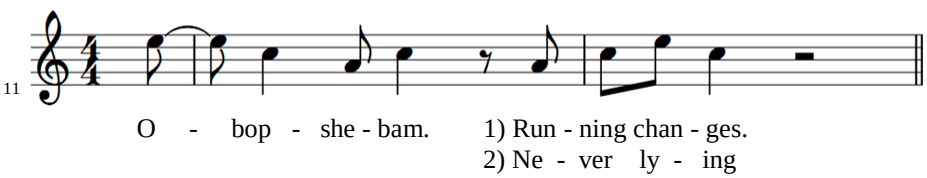
which distance bebop from earlier jazz but the mixture of harmonic and rhythmic deviations: "Although many swing era players could understand the harmonic changes the bop musicians introduced… it was the combination of extended harmonies *and* a new rhythmic vocabulary that made bop appear so revolutionary" (97, emphasis in original). Kay echoes both the extended harmonies and "new rhythmic vocabulary" of bebop in the language of "Music."

The section itself formally resembles the Gillespie song. The narrator uses the phrase "O-bop-she-bam" twice, with both occuring in the second paragraph of the section. In "Oop Bop Sh'bam," the chorus consists of eight measures – the call-and-response vocal played/sung twice (bars 1-2 and 5-6) with a different trumpet riff following each time (bars 3-4 and 7-8). The phrase's positionality in the paragraph, once toward the beginning and again near the end, roughly approximates the chorus of the song as played once through. While the chorus is repeated several times in the track, it is done so primarily at the beginning, following a brief introduction on the trumpet and piano. Given the parallel structure between the tune and text, the first paragraph serves a similar function as the song introduction – setting the tenor and building up to the chorus. The narrator's reference to Joss' accompanyment as a "galloping piano behind him" (131) in the second paragraph strengthens the analogue between the two since the introduction in the former consists of an exchange between the trumpet and piano. Furthermore, by having Joss trade the lead with the piano, Kay cleverly alludes to the pianist Tipton, who is literally "behind" the character of Joss.

As Gillespie replies to the scat call with an economical phrase with layers of meaning, "a-klook-a-mop," the narrator responds to each scat outburst with a short linguistic sentence which retains the rhythmic pattern of the song. The first is succeeded by the phrase "Running changes" (131) and the second by "Never lying" (132). In each case, the four syllables of the respective

sentences mirror the four beats in the expression "a-klook-a-mop."[11] Moreover, the two short sentences serve as the themes (or choruses) around which the entire section in improvised. The former, "running changes," reflects the capability the music affords Joss to transform within and between the multiple layers of his complex identity, while the latter, "never lying," represents the music's ability to eschew the artifice of language and the reductive classifications it often requires – "to name the name itself," as Theodor Adorno discerns, "not to communicate meanings" (114). In addition to the music, scat's non-linguistic imitation of the rhythm section is characterized as more candid as well: "Never lying. Telling it like it is. Like it is. O bop she bam" (131). When the scat line is repeated, its "truthfulness" is reiterated, the phrasing virtually identical, just rearranged, as are the chords over which Joss is playing: "O bop she bam. Never lying. Telling it like it is" (132).

The lack of linguistic signification in both scat and the music it mimics is precisely the absence that playing music affords Joss: "Playing the horn is not about being somebody coming from something. It is about being nobody coming from nothing. The horn ruthlessly strips him bare till he ends up with no body, no past, nothing" (135). This recalls Ralph Ellison's assertion that "because jazz finds its very life in an endless improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazzman must lose his identity even as he finds it" (*Shadow and Act* 234). For Joss, though, losing his identity allows him to escape the confines of linguistic categorization: "[W]hen he takes off he is the whole century galloping to its close. The wide moors. The big mouth. Scotland. Africa. Slavery. Freedom. He is a girl. A man. Everything, nothing. He is sickness, health. The sun. The moon. Black, white. Nothing weighs him down. Not the past or future"



(136). Here, Kay illuminates some of the many contradictions Joss embodies, but through his music, he is able to "bend" the rigid binaries to reflect his liminality between them: "He hangs on to the high C and then lets go. Screams. Lets it go. Bends his notes and bends his body. His whole body is bent over double. His trumpet pointing down at the floor then up at the sky. He plays another high C. He holds on" (136). The repetition of the verb "bend" and the note "high C" are both significant in the music's ability to negotiate a less reductive conception of identity and to Joss' affiliation with Gillespie.

In the prologue to *Invisible Man*, Ellison's narrator declares that Louis Armstrong's trumpet playing "bends that military instrument into a beam of lyrical sound" (8), reflecting jazz's exploration of the blue notes between the rigidly observed semi-tones on the chromatic scale of Western music. Gillespie, who continued this process of "bending" accepted musical conventions by developing modern jazz trumpet styles, visually reflects Invisible Man's description with his trademark bent trumpet.[12] According to Gillespie, the alteration of the trumpet's shape first occurred by accident: "I left my horn on a trumpet stand and someone kicked it over, and instead of just falling, the horn bent" (387). The damaged trumpet had a different timbre due to the constricted airflow, but he liked the sound and closer proximity of the bell to the ear, so he commissioned a custom-made trumpet with the bell pointing upward at a 45-degree angle which he played for the remainder of his career (Gillespie and Fraser 387). Although there is no suggestion that Joss plays a similarly bent instrument, the frequent

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[12] 
A photograph of Gillespie's bent trumpet on display at the Smithsonian Museum. Source: http://www.pbase.com/image/28581073

repetition of the verb "bend" in his music and his physical alignment with the trumpet (as embodying both genders) suggest that Gillespie's horn provides an ideally "bent" alternative to the normative gender binary.

The repeated C note strengthens the connection to Gillespie's "Oop Bop Sh'bam" while representing yet another liminal space. The song is in the trumpet key of C-major (concert pitch of B-flat-major), with half of the main theme consisting "simply of three notes, the triad of A, C, and E"[13] (Feather 72). C is also the final trumpet note of the song, highlighting the parallel to "Music" since Joss hits the "high C" in final paragraph of the section. In addition to reinforcing the "naturalness" of Joss' identity, in contrast with its concert pitch identification as "accidental," the narrator's reference to the note as C reinforces his liminality. The key of C-major separates the sharp keys from the flat keys on the circle of fifths, and middle C divides the treble from the bass clef and is part of both, occupying the central position on the grand staff. Therefore, like Shakespeare's androgynous Viola in *Twelfth Night* (neither bass nor violin, but both), Joss' alignment with the note/key of C situates him in the liminal space between a distinct gender binary while embodying characteristics from both.

"C" is also a homophone to "sea," locating it as a "fluid," transnational space which defies national appropriation and problematizes the notion of a monolithic national identity. This is supported by both phrases associated with the note/key in the text: "high C" and "wild C." The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "high sea" as "the area of the sea not within the territorial jurisdiction of any nation, but the free highway of all nations" ("sea, n."), making it an ideal metaphor for a less concrete reimagining of national belonging. In addition, Gillespie's account

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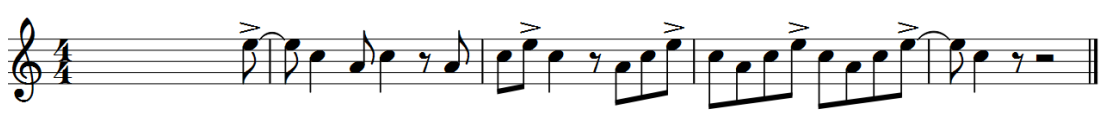

of his first tour to Europe with his band in 1948 in his autobiography is entitled "High Seas" (326). Known for his propensity for wordplay, Gillespie is certainly Signifyin(g) on the ubiquitous trumpet note while also, perhaps, alluding to Louis Armstrong's *Swing That Music* (1936). Relating his European tour in 1931, Armstrong labels the section of his early autobiography/jazz history "Highseas [*sic*] and High C's" (99), explicitly drawing the analogue between the two.

While the parallels to "Oop Bop Sh'bam" (the quotation of the scat chorus as the "lyrics" and the remainder of the language mirroring the music) resemble Murray's concept of "reciprocal 'voicing'" inherent in the blues idiom, his theory takes on a transcultural dimension in Kay's novel. By combining her Scottish voice with Gillespie's music, the exchange transcends national and cultural boundaries, reflecting an idyllic model of cultural reciprocity in a globalized world. Gillespie played a major role in the development of musical transculturation in jazz, particularly by instigating the Cubop movement discussed in the previous chapter, and "Oop Bop Sh'bam," not surprisingly, has a transnational dimension, as well. The song, which became one of bop's anthems, was also recorded by Machito and his Afro-Cubans under the name "U-Bla-Ba-Du" in 1950 (Nicholson 96). While Machito's version borrows the chorus phrases from "Oop Bop Sh'bam," the tune is transculturated to reflect the Cuban influence, as the singer, Graciela, "delivers some serious bilingual bebop language backed by a rumba beat" (Visser 29). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Ralph Ellison, writing at the height of the Cubop craze, references the rumba rhythm and incorporates it structurally in *Invisible Man*, signaling the shift to a transcultural jazz aesthetic. By quoting from "Oop Bop Sh'bam," Kay also alludes to the cultural interaction of Cubop and mirrors Machito's transcultural rendition with Scottish idioms instead of those of Cuba.

Scottish Ballads and Bebop "Rolled into One"

While naming their adopted son, Joss' wife Millie relates, they "nearly divorced" (5) because she wanted an Irish name and he wanted a jazz name. Millie laughed at his litany of names (which included Jelly Roll, Howlin' Wolf, Bird, Muggsy, Fats, and Leadbelly), causing Joss to slap her, claiming "[w]hite people always laugh at black names" (5). They finally "compromised on Colman spelt the Irish way and not like Coleman Hawkins. That way we could get an Irish name and a jazz name rolled into one" (5-6). By modeling Joss' trumpet playing after that of Dizzy Gillespie, Kay chooses an American musician with a Scottish name and a jazz name "rolled into one," highlighting her amalgamation of Scottish folk music and "American" jazz in the narrative.

In "The Scottish Surnames of Colonial America," David Dobson provides the etymology of Gillespie: "Descriptive, from the Gaelic *'gille easbuig'* meaning servant of the bishop" (50). The Scottish were active participants in the slave trade and many became plantation owners in the Americas (Kay, "Missing Faces"). According to the website for Cheraw, South Carolina, where Gillespie was born, one of the earliest European settlers in the area was James Gillespie in the 1740s ("A Brief History of Cheraw"). Although the name lingers from the brutal history of slavery, Gillespie embraced his Scottish heritage and frequently toured there. In a 2004 article in Scotland's Sunday Herald, Willie Ruff, a renowned jazz musician who played with Gillespie, elaborates on the trumpeter's ties to Scotland: "All during the time that I played with Dizzy Gillespie he insisted we go to Scotland…. Gillespie, with his profoundly Scottish name, said his great-grandparents talked about people in the Cape Fear region who spoke only Gaelic"

(Crichton).[14] Kay incorporates both the Celtic and American associations of his name in *Trumpet* by blending Scottish folk melodies with the "American" rhythms of bebop.

The initial indication of this musical amalgamation occurs in the first chapter when Millie quotes the traditional Scottish ballad "Loch Lomond" alongside several jazz standards, such as "Take the A Train," "Ain't Misbehavin,'" and "Honeysuckle Rose" (23-9). "Loch Lomond" is not as incongruent with the others as it may initially appear, however, as it has been reinterpreted into the jazz idiom by several notable artists. Claude Thornhill created a popular arrangement in 1937 which was recorded by groups such as the Benny Goodman Orchestra and the Maxine Sullivan Orchestra (Studwell and Baldin 39). Kay elaborates on the jazzed renditions of "Loch Lomond" by creating her own Scottish jazz fusion via the two sections in which we see Joss unmediated by the memories of others.

Aside from "Music," the only section in which the reader views Joss directly is the penultimate chapter entitled "Last Word," a final letter to his son Colman. Joss introduces the letter by relating the arrival of his father, John Moore, in Scotland. As he approaches death, Joss begins to ascertain that individual diasporic stories are important, as opposed to just the collective narrative: "I told you his story could be the story of any black man who came from Africa to Scotland. His story, I told you, was the diaspora. Every story runs into the same river and the same river runs into the sea. But I've changed my mind…. I'm holding a candle to myself. I can see him, because he told me the story, as clearly as if I was right there" (271). Joss realizes his father's legacy lives on in him because of the story, inspiring him to impart the story, and that of his own life, to Colman. The awareness that his father's unique narrative is

[14] Ruff, a professor of musicology at Yale University since 1971, followed up on Gillespie's claim about Gaelic protestant churches in the American south, and was astounded by their musical similarities to the black Baptist churches he attended in Alabama. As a result, Ruff, an African American, formulated the controversial theory that the African American practice of "lining out" originates not from their African roots but from those of the Scottish slave masters.

valuable within and against that of the diaspora as a whole suggests Joss' view of history and diasporic identity are becoming more "jazz shaped" as he approaches death. This is reinforced by Ralph Ellison's famous dictum:

> There is a cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself. For true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment (as distinct from the uninspired commercial performance) springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity. (234)

Like a "true jazz moment," his father's identity, like Kay's, exists within the common voice of the African diaspora, but it also "challenges the rest" with its individual voice. This uniqueness is portrayed in the song Joss quotes his father singing and with which he ultimately identifies – a Scottish folk song entitled "Mingulay Boat Song."

John Moore, who immigrated to Scotland at the turn of the century aboard the HMS *Spiteful*, understandably experienced a profound sense of displacement in his new country: "He missed his mother, his country, his mother-country" (275). Joss recalls that his father found some comfort, though, in Scottish folk songs, through which he expressed his homesickness: "My father had a wonderful singing voice and could sing from memory just about any folk song that I wanted. Every time he sang Scottish folk songs, he'd have this far-away look in his eyes. *Heil Ya Ho, boys, let her go boys, Swing her head round, And all together*" (275). John Moore identifies with the longing of sailors to return home, as noted by Alan Rice: "Moody's father can be at home in Scotland partly because folk memories are transported across and between cultures by music" (147). The second half of the chorus repeats "Heil ya ho, boys, Let her go boys" and

then adds the line "Sailing homeward to Mingulay." For John Moore, homeward is not toward Scotland, but Africa, which exists as a fantasy place for Joss but a very real homeland for his father. Significantly, the song is a sea chantey, a tune sung by rowers to keep them in stride, so the singers are displaced at sea with Mingulay as a hazy memory and an elusive destination. Furthermore, as Rice observes, "the folk song has the rhythm of a shanty [*sic*], the origin of which is in the collision of Celtic folk songs with African American work songs in the ports of the deep South" (147), marking an early Scottish/African American musical hybrid. The Atlantic Ocean, of course, separates Joss' father from his homeland, but so does the foggy sea of memory: "The trouble with the past, my father said, is that you no longer know what you could be remembering. My own country is lost to me now, more or less all of it, drowned at sea in the dead of a dark, dark, night" (273). Joss decides to recount the story of his father in his final letter to Colman because he is concerned with how he will be remembered in the "sea" of memory in light of the secret he knows his death will reveal.

Kay also quotes from "Mingulay Boat Song" in her poem "Darling," in which the speaker sings it to her dying friend: "I held her hand and sang a song from when I was a girl –/ *Heil Ya Ho Boys, Let Her Go Boys*/ And when I stopped singing she had slipped away" (8-10). In both instances, Kay associates the song, which obviously has some personal meaning for her, with death – the death of the speaker's friend in "Darling" and the death of Joss' father and his own in *Trumpet*. When he repeats the refrain the second time in the penultimate paragraph, Joss is embarking on a journey of his own: "I am going. I am off. My own father is back by the bed here singing. The present is just a loop stitch. *Heil Ya Ho, boys, Let her go, boys*" (277). Joss' father creates a distinctly Afro-Scottish form of music, adding to what Caryl Phillips terms the "many-tongued chorus" (1) which reverberates across the black Atlantic, as Rice acknowledges:

"The loop stitch circles, constructing links between Africa, the US, and Scotland" (147). Kay creates a new transcultural musical link in the novel as a whole by juxtaposing a Scottish sea chantey with an Afro-American bebop standard.

Despite their different musical genres and cultural contexts, the chorus to "Mingulay Boat Song" is structurally similar to that of "Oop Bop Sh'bam." Both contain four phrases, two bars apiece, with the first and third phrase (bars 1-2 and 5-6) identical and the alternating phrases (bars 3-4 and 7-8) each unique. Kay also quotes them in a comparable fashion. In "Music," the narrator references the main phrase of "Oop Bop Sh'bam" twice in the same paragraph while mirroring the alternating trumpet solos linguistically, establishing the paragraph as the chorus of the section. In "Last Word," Joss quotes both the first and second phrases of "Mingulay Boat Song" in regard to his father, and then repeats the first phrase (the same as the third phrase of the song) as he approaches his own departure, setting the entire section as a chorus which reaches across time and space, from John Moore to Joss to Colman and, ultimately, to the reader.

The parallel quotations of a bebop song in "Music" and a Scottish folk tune in "Last Word," the only two sections directly linked with Joss and composed during his lifetime, associate him, his music, and the text with a Scottish-American hybridization of jazz. This is reflected most explicitly in Joss' substitution of the term "a wee shindig" for a jam session. In his essay on the birth of bebop at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, Ellison describes that the advent of bop established the jam session as "the jazzman's true academy" (Shadow and Act 208) and relates the story of Gillespie destroying his idol, Roy Eldridge in a jamming contest. By substituting an overtly Scottish phrase in lieu of one so fundamentally associated with the jazz tradition, Kay accentuates the transculturation of the music itself in her novel. "For Christ's sake, Millie," Joss' distraught widow imagines him saying through her grief, "Don't mourn me,

celebrate me…. Have a wee shindig" (32). By combining Scottish songs and vernacular with those of jazz in *Trumpet,* Kay gives Joss his wee shindig – a wee jazz shindig.

***Listen* it**

Like *Invisible Man* and Toni Morrison's *Jazz, Trumpet* calls for an ethical response from its audience. "Bop," claims Stuart Nicholson, "knocked listeners out of their diatonic comfort zones. It demanded the active participation of its audience, which had to *listen* to understand what was going on. Jazz was consciously moving out of the realm of entertainment and demanding acceptance as an art form in its own right (97). Likewise, Kay takes Joss' life (and Tipton's by extension) from "the realm of entertainment" (the scandalous portrayal in the sensationalist media) into the realm of "art" through her novelization. Consequently, she jars us, as readers, out of our "diatonic comfort zones," requiring us to actively *listen* to Joss' life, and all the contradictions it embodies, rather than use it as fodder for entertainment. Joss himself, when we finally hear him speak (through his letter to Colman), stresses the shift in emphasis/agency from the author to the reader.

After relating the story of his father, Joss evades his own, ultimately shifting the focus to Colman. As a disembodied voice, Joss knows his legacy rests in Colman's hands and he, as author, is powerless to change it: "Maybe you will understand, maybe you won't" (276). Rather than destroy it, however, he bequeaths his life to his son, reinforcing the agency of the reader in creating meaning in the story: "I've left it all for you, my letters, photographs, records, documents, certificates. It's all here. Mine and your own" (276). The second person pronoun "you" breaks the barrier between self and Other – author and reader, performer and audience – with the final phrase implying that, like Colman, our lives are entwined with his. Furthermore,

the text itself is organized as a compilation of letters, record titles, interviews, and lists, reflecting the documents Joss leaves Colman and further aligning him with the reader. As Joss' father lives on in his son through story, Joss' life remains with Colman and the reader, as Kay elucidates in "Darling": "The dead don't go till you do, loved ones./ The dead are still here holding our hands" (15-16). The ethical responsibility of the reader is reiterated more explicitly a few lines later in Joss' letter: "I thought to myself, who could make sense of all this? Then I thought of you. I am leaving myself to you" (277). Like Morrison's narrator in *Jazz,* Joss leaves his life both literally and figuratively in the hands of the reader.

Joss recognizes as he approaches death (ending his ability to "narrate" his own life) that Colman will have the power to control his story, reversing their relationship: "I've discovered that the future is something else entirely. That our worries are too wee. It is quite simple: all of this is my past, this is the sum of my parts; you are my future. I will be your son now in a strange way. You will be my father telling or not telling my story" (277). Similar to the documents Joss leaves Colman, the compilation of various genres and perspectives of the text each provide insight into a different "part" of Joss' life. Once again, the "you" addresses the reader as well as Colman, since we must also assemble the details and draw an interpretation from the sum of Joss' parts – the different, often contradictory, facets of his life – and we all become responsible for his story. Accordingly, the reversal of roles between Joss and Colman suggests a parallel interchange between the author/narrator and reader, as well. *Trumpet* represents Joss' past, and we, as readers, join Colman in becoming his "future."

The acknowledgement of the reader's ultimate power does not guarantee a positive future for Joss, though, but a shifting of agency. He continues the direct address of Colman/the reader, predicting strong emotional responses: "You will understand or you won't. You will keep me or

lose me. You will hate me or love me. You will change me or hold me dear. You will do either or both for years" (277). Here, Joss acknowledges the limitations of the author and the authority of the reader to interpret and respond to the text, an agency he highlights in the final paragraph of his letter: "Can you remember sitting on my shoulders? Remember sitting on my shoulders. Remember playing my trumpet. Do you remember fishing on the old boat with Angus? I'm being silly: remember what you like. I've told you everything" (277). Initially, Joss responds to his own call by rephrasing the question as an imperative command, seeking to control Colman's/the reader's response to his life. The second command further highlights the reversal of Joss and Colman/the reader since Joss implores us to remember playing his trumpet, rather than him playing it. Significantly, Colman playing his father's trumpet represents another giving voice to the instrument symbolic of Joss himself. Likewise, the reader is able to give voice and meaning to the words on the page – to play Kay's *Trumpet* – and therefore Joss' life, as well. In responding to the final question, Joss finally concedes that he cannot control the response ("I'm being silly: remember what you like"). Like Joss, Kay also stresses the importance of the reader's free response to her work:

> I'm really interested in my readers' responses. I make a lot of room for my readers. When I write, I actually think about it consciously, about creating a space so that the reader can come in with their life, their experiences, their disappointments, and their loves. I want it to be like the call and response of the blues. So, I'm happiest if a reader comes up to me and says, "Oh that bit meant so much to me because that was exactly like such and such that happened in my life." That makes me happier than anything else as a writer. You as writer call and the reader responds. (" Interview with Jackie Kay")

Michael Ondaatje exemplifies Kay's veneration of an antiphonic exchange between the author/narrator and reader/listener, as well as the ultimate influence of the latter, in *Coming Through Slaughter.* Just prior to the moment that Bolden plays the long note leading to his "madness," he achieves his musical idyll with a dancer accompanying the parade: "[T]his is what I wanted, always, the loss of privacy in the playing, leaving the stage, the rectangle on the street, this hearer who can throw me in the direction and the speed she chooses like an angry shadow " (130). The reader, as "hearer," also has the power to throw the author's text "in the direction and the speed she chooses like an angry shadow," a power of which Joss is certainly aware in his letter to Colman. At the moment Bolden plays the note which leads to his madness, Ondaatje most explicitly conflates the written and the audible through the musician's plea to "watch it *listen* it *listen* it" (131, emphasis in original). As one sentence, substitution of "listen" for "watch" is accentuated, highlighting the differences in the verbs. More importantly, the absence of the preposition "to" after the verb "listen" places it in the direct object position, inducing a moment of dissonance in the reader since it is unconventional and fails to adhere to the grammatical conventions of standard English. It is purposeful, however, in conveying Bolden's command, emphasized by the italicized text, to directly "listen" the music, rather than to indirectly listen *to* it. As a musically-structured jazz text, and since Ondaatje suggests his presence in the character of Bolden, this is also the author's instruction to not just read the text or listen *to* it but to actively "*listen* it," or in Manina Jones' words, "to break 'this window,' the barrier, perhaps, between passive reader and text as object" (10).

Ondaatje's adoption of Bolden and emphasis on listening is augmented by the novel's title. Although *Coming Through Slaughter* refers to Bolden's passage through the hamlet of Slaughter on his way north from New Orleans to the East Louisiana State Hospital, it also

rephrases a line from James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues." When Sonny finally reunites with his fellow bebop musicians on stage, the narrator relates the experience of his playing as an audience member: "He had made it his: that long line, of which we knew only Mama and Daddy. And he was giving it back, as everything must be given back, so that, *passing through death*, it can live forever" (47, my emphasis). Ondaatje's intertextual allusion in the novel's title highlights his project of making Bolden's story his own and "giving it back" in the form of fiction. Rather than attempt to construct a linear "History," Ondaatje takes the "desert of facts" and "cut[s] them open and spread[s] them out like garbage" (134), imbuing Bolden's life with a fictional vitality such that "passing through death" – or coming through slaughter – "it can live forever."

Bolden is finally able to escape "the 20th century game of fame" (134) through his utopic exchange with the dancer, culminating in the long note which leads to a hemorrhage, but it is Ondaatje's voice that comes through Bolden's "slaughter," commanding the reader to "watch it *listen* it *listen* it" (131). In "Sonny's Blues," Baldwin's narrator provides a poignant example of "*listen[ing]* it" (the music), extending the command to the reader (listener of the text):

> Sonny went all the way back, he really began with the spare, flat statement of the opening phrase of the song. Then he began to make it his. It was very beautiful because it wasn't hurried and it was no longer a lament. I seemed to hear with what burning he had made it his, with what burning we had yet to make it ours, how we could cease lamenting. Freedom lurked around us and I understood, at last, that he could help us to be free if we would listen, that he would never be free until we did. (47)

Like Ondaatje with Bolden, Kay takes the "spare, flat statement" of Tipton's death and passionately makes it her own. And like Sonny, Joss finds an aesthetic vehicle for transcending

the confines of his identity and attaining "freedom" in the "more fluid" improvisation of bebop. In *Trumpet,* Kay eulogizes the life of Joss Moody in the form of "a wee shindig," a transcultural jazz jam session. By employing a bebop aesthetic, she forces us out of our "diatonic comfort zones" to actively participate in the creation of a less reductive perception of identity which allows for a diversity and hybridity of voices. Doing so, however, requires an emphasis on listening, rather than just speaking. "Improvisation," as Ingrid Monson reminds us, "*is* an apt metaphor for more flexible social thinking, but you've got to listen to the whole band if you ever expect to say something" (215). By adding *Trumpet* to "the band" of jazz novels, Kay expands the range of voices, challenging us to question our prejudices through active listening and then provide an ethical response by broadening our conception of personal and national identity. For, like Sonny, Joss "could help us be free if we would listen," and he will never be free until we do.

Outro

Conclusions, by their very nature, invite concise, organized summaries which tidily encapsulate all loose ends and bring about ultimate closure, but such a recapitulation would be consistent with neither the jazz aesthetic nor the endings uniting *Invisible Man* and *Trumpet* with other jazz texts, such as *Coming Through Slaughter*, "Sonny's Blues," and *Jazz.* As Toni Morrison contends in a 1983 interview, "Classical music satisfies and closes. Black music does not do that. Jazz always keeps you on the edge. There is no final chord. There may be a long chord, but no final chord… There is always something else that you want from the music." (Morrison and McKay 429). Although much twentieth century classical music would challenge this generalization, Morrison does highlight an overall pattern (not to mention that many black musical forms had a profound influence of on much classical music of the twentieth century). Therefore, as the stylus continues to trace the spiraling groove during these final, fleeting revolutions before the turntable clicks to a halt, I will offer a long chord rather than any pretense of a final one.

In these essays, I have attempted to address a void in literary criticism, following recent trends in musicology, by examining the impact of transcultural jazz fusions and the global influence of "American" jazz in *Invisible Man* and *Trumpet*, demonstrating the music's ability to cross both national and ideological boundaries and serve as a model for more flexible social interaction. Czech-Canadian author Josef Škvorecký highlights this capacity of jazz in his essay "Red Music," one of the most striking illustrations of the swift international influence of jazz. Written as an introduction to his novella *The Bass Saxophone*, Škvorecký provides a poignant depiction of the threat posed by jazz to both the Nazi and Soviet dictatorships which successively

occupied his native Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), as well as the drastic (though less-than-successful) measures taken in the attempt to curtail the influence of what the former termed "Judeonegroid music" (85) and the latter "music of the cannibals" (93). Even though perceived as a threat by totalitarian ideologues on both ends of the political spectrum, however, Škvorecký claims jazz is not inherently "protest":

> [N]o matter what LeRoi Jones says to the contrary, the essence of this music, this 'way of making music,' is not simply protest. Its essence is something far more elemental: an *élan vital*, a forceful vitality, an explosive creative energy as breathtaking as that of any true art, that may be felt even in the saddest of blues. Its effect is cathartic.
>
> But of course, when the lives of individuals and communities are controlled by powers that themselves remain uncontrolled – slavers, czars, führers, first secretaries, marshals, generals and generalissimos, ideologists of dictatorships at either end of the spectrum – then creative energy becomes a protest. (83-4)

Jazz is threatening to dictatorial powers, in other words, because it will not conform to the required unanimity of obstinate hegemonic ideals. The same, of course, holds true for totalizing ideologies on a personal level which seek to have the beliefs, looks, and actions of others conform to one's own. Through a jazz aesthetic, *Invisible Man* and *Trumpet* reflect jazz's resistance to essentialism and absolutism by incorporating numerous diverse, hybridized voices which interact "within and against the group" to form the unity of the whole. In addition to the emphasis on speaking, though, the texts also highlight the often undervalued activity of listening, requiring a more active response from the reader/listener.

Roland Barthes claims that "listening speaks," meaning that "the listener's silence [is] as active as the locutor's speech" (*The Responsibilty of Forms* 252). The emphasis on active listening that these texts present – to actively "*listen* it" as Ondaatje's Bolden commands (rather than passively listen *to* it) – suggests a more egalitarian corresponding relationship between composer/performer/listener and author/narrator/reader, placing the ultimate agency on the latter to respond in a more ethical manner. Barthes recognizes the fundamental parallel between the liberation of listening and that of societies:

> [I]t is believed that, in order to liberate listening, it suffices to begin speaking oneself – whereas a free listening is essentially a listening which circulates, which permutates, which disaggregates, by its mobility, the fixed networks of the roles of speech: it is not possible to imagine a free society, if we agree in advance to preserve it with the old modes of listening: those of the believer, the disciple, the patient. (259)

The active listening and audience involvement encouraged by jazz are a threat to totalizing powers and ideologies because they recall the "free listening" to which Barthes refers, disintegrating "the fixed network of the roles of speech." This helps to illuminate why, as Škvorecký contends, "the ideological guns and sometimes even the police guns of all dictatorships are pointed at the men with horns" (84)**.** Despite such efforts to suppress the influence of jazz, however, Barthes provides some insight into the music's resilience: "[N]o law is in a position to constrain our listening: freedom of listening is as necessary as freedom of speech" (*The Responsibility of Forms* 260).

In these essays, I have attempted to "listen" to these novels, demonstrating the ways in which they employ a jazz aesthetic to disaggregate rigid boundaries and sound barriers and move

toward a more flexible conception of identity and interaction in a global community. By mirroring the structure, rhythms and repetitions of the music, the texts exemplify Jackie Kay's observation of music's complex relationship to identity: "I think the wonder part about certain pieces of music is that when we're listening to them we can lose ourselves in them, but we can also find ourselves in them, that music defines us, but it also help us to lose our definitions" ("An Interview with Jackie Kay"). These liberating qualities of jazz, combined with the concurrent technological advances in music recording and dissemination, account for its rapid and profound global influence, and the space to incorporate a diversity of voices within and against the group has fostered the integration of global folk traditions with "American" jazz, both within and outside the borders of the United States. By structurally incorporating transculturated jazz fusions and requiring an active response from the reader, *Invisible Man* and *Trumpet* reflect these qualities of the music, providing an aesthetic model for "jamming" on an increasingly interconnected, pluralistic global stage.

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