

**Jazz-Shaped Bodies:
Mapping City Space, Time, and Sound
in Black Transnational Literature**

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You think
the words inside our heads are a
part of us? Like the phantom limb,
ghost bone, or breath

chiasmus? And what's what,
when the whole language is

versus us? DJ,
speak with your hands;

address us.

— Wayde Compton, "Wow and Flutter"

Abstract

“Jazz-Shaped Bodies” addresses representations of the city in black transnational literature, with a focus on sonic schemas and mapping. Drawing on cultural geography, posthumanist thought, and the discourse of diaspora, the thesis examines the extent to which the urban landscape is figured as a panoptic structure in twentieth and twenty-first century diasporic texts, and how the mimetic function of artistic performance challenges this structure. Through comparative analysis of works emerging from and/or invested with sites in American, Canadian, and Caribbean landscapes, the study develops accretively and is structured thematically, tracing how selected texts: map the socio-spatial dialectic through visual and sonic schemas; develop the metaphorical use of the phonograph in the folding of space and time; revive ancestral memory and renew an engagement with the landscape; negotiate and transcend shifting national, cultural, and geographical borderlines and boundaries that seek to encode and enclose black subjectivity.

The project focuses on literary works such as James Baldwin’s intimate cartographies of New York in *Another Country* (1962), Earl Lovelace’s carnivalising of city space in *The Dragon Can’t Dance* (1979), Toni Morrison’s creative blending of the sounds of black music in *Jazz* (1992), and the postbody poetics of Wayde Compton’s *Performance Bond* (2004), among other texts that enact crossings of, or otherwise pierce, binaries and borderlines, innovating portals for alternative interpellation and subverting racially hegemonic visual regimes concretised in the architecture of the city. An examination of the specificity of the cityscape against the wider arc of transnationalism establishes how African American, Afro-

Caribbean, and Black Canadian texts share and exchange touchstones such as jazz, kinesis, liminality, and hauntedness, while remaining sensitive to the distinct socio-historical contexts and intensities at each locus, underscoring the significance of rendition — of body, space, time, and sound — to black transnational writing.

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Introduction

This is people taller than cathedrals; this is people more beautiful than avenues with trees.

— Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can't Dance*

Two decades have passed since Paul Gilroy re-conceptualised the black diaspora within a new model of abstraction, *The Black Atlantic* (1993), employing the image of 'ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol' (4). With the motif of ships voyaging across the Atlantic, Gilroy launches an oceanic framework by which to understand the African diaspora as an intercultural and transnational formation, a 'historical nexus of contemporary black identities' (Chude-Sokei 740). His chronotope of sailing ships roots/routes black culture in/through the experience of Crossing the Water, emphasising the spatial, temporal, and ontological ruptures this entailed (Gilroy 222), and positions the ocean as liminal space between Africa and diasporic sites in the Western hemisphere.

Critical interest in Black Atlantic studies is vast, yet there is often a distinct privileging of American geographies within this theoretical paradigm. Areas such as the Caribbean and Canada remain on the periphery of critical debates, and a Eurocentric emphasis pervades literary discourse, concentrating attention on, for example, dialogues between New York and Paris, such as in Brent Hayes Edwards' influential *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003). This project applies a transnational framework which addresses these imbalances to an analysis of the conceptual city

in diasporic literature, explicating connections between depictions of cities across American, Canadian, and Caribbean urban landscapes.

Subsequent works have built upon, and in some cases interrogated, the continued relevance of Gilroy's chronotope, facilitating a renewed engagement with the paradigm from contemporary perspectives. Edwards is critical of the Black Atlantic paradigm because, he argues, it is organised around a 'principle of continuity' (*Practice* 12) which 'continually draws Gilroy back into the quagmire of origins' ("Uses" 63). Edwards' black transnationalism focuses on diaspora connectedness across temporal and spatial fissures, points of separation, 'a constitutive *décalage* in the very weave of the culture' (13). The French here points to a discrepancy in time or in space, which Edwards integrates into a discourse of diaspora that 'points to difference' (12). Edwards' model of *décalage* acknowledges unevenness, a 'different kind of interface... the kernel of that which cannot be transferred or exchanged... [that] 'refuse[s] to pass over when one crosses the water' (14), like the untranslatable sense in the designation itself.

George Elliott Clarke identifies a 'gap in the map' (81) of Gilroy's oceanic framework, arguing in *Odysseys Home* (2002) that the '*Black Atlantic* is really a vast Bermuda Triangle into which Canada — read as British North America or Nouvelle France or even as an American satellite — vanishes' (9). Clarke makes clear Canada's status as a 'site of New World, African enslavement, immigration, emigration, anti-racist struggle, and cultural imagination', and contests the 'blunt irrelevance of Canada' that dominates black-oriented scholarship (8). However, other Black Canadian critics harness Gilroy's configuration; in *Black Like Who?* (1997), Rinaldo Walcott points to Gilroy's 'assertion that other travels need to be

mapped and charted', allowing for a recuperation of the Black Atlantic paradigm for Black Canadian scholarship (32). In fact, Walcott implies a graduation from the confines of the configuration, stating that 'a simple notion of inclusion... is no longer necessary, sufficient nor required — black Canadas exist and will continue to do so' (31). Walcott echoes Edwards' diasporic discourse, focusing on 'the spaces or gaps through which our current thinking on diaspora might receive continued invigoration if a detour is taken through Canada' (31). Chapter two of the study enacts this detour, tracing sound waves and resonances that vibrate along the "sounding line" that 'migrate[s], drift[s], and echo[es]' across the North American landscape, from Alabama to Vancouver and beyond (Compton, *Bluesprint* 14; Smyth 390).

British Columbian writer Wayde Compton addresses the 'conceptual bounds of the African diaspora', foregrounding 'oblique', marginal expressions of blackness free from local expectations and the identity politics implicated in a national black consciousness (*After* 13). In *After Canaan* (2010), Compton develops an 'assertive Afroperipheralism' that exposes the porousness of the borderlines between margin and centre, enabling radical experiments of identity and signalling his movement towards the forging of a Black Pacific sensibility (15). Similarly, Nathaniel Mackey's essays on black literature of the United States and the Caribbean, *Discrepant Engagement* (1993), attend to 'the weight borne and the wobble introduced by positions peripheral to contested center' (1), noting that notions of centre and margin are increasingly 'problematic' and 'relativized' concepts in critical theory (2). He prefaces his work with an admission that his 'taxonomic practices... stand on poetic — that is, made-up — ground' (4), suggesting the openness and fluidity of

Compton's approach to the creation of a Black Pacific framework, further developed below.

Barbadian poet and critic Kamau Brathwaite also adduces an oceanic framework to explain diaspora; his *tidalectics* proposes 'an Africanist model for thinking about history', a cyclical chronotope invested with the motion of the tides, 'a palimpsest, where generations overlap generations, and eras wash over eras' (Compton, *Bluesprint* 17). Brathwaite's 'discursive alternative' advances a model of tidal ebb and flow as a methodology of resistance to the Hegelian master/slave dialectic, which he renders as 'Euromissilic' and expansionist (*ConVERSations* 226). Brathwaite's palimpsestic configuration interrupts the linearity Edwards identifies in Gilroy's image of ships moving back and forth across the ocean, and is suggestive of the spatial and temporal innovations found in diasporic literature: 'For whatever comes [out] must be echo back' (227, original crotchets). Additionally, Brathwaite extends his tidalectics to encompass the oral tradition as he renders the relationship between performer and audience as participatory and kinetic: 'there's riddim to all this Structure and shape and hopefully destination... [it is] tidalectic' (225-226), inscribing diaspora with an antiphonal impulse.

The following chapters constellate texts by writers and critics whose work can be interpreted as a response to the *Black Atlantic* call for a greater appreciation and application of 'an inescapably subjective contemplation of the mimetic functions of artistic performance in the process of struggles towards emancipation, citizenship, and eventually autonomy' (56). This is a struggle for freedom from colonial oppression and racial tyranny, for empowerment through cultural — and

therefore political — means. In the context of American history, Gilroy argues that through ‘the pursuit of recognition and eventual attainment of formal citizenship’:

African Americans succeeded in assembling a hard won and utterly unique definition of modern freedom: wrought from the struggle to overcome slavery and then refined during their protracted battle to overthrow the institutionalization of the segregationist principle of separate but equal (“Race” 2).

The “freedom-seeking” Gilroy posits as part of African American identity formations is a movement towards autonomy and self-determination: an *assertion* of freedom entwined with and borne of political, cultural, and imaginative agency. Yet he, like many other critics (*New Jim Crow* author Michelle Alexander and radical geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore are notable examples), stresses the continued urgency of this assertion of freedom in light of the endurance of state-sanctioned racial violence¹ and implementation of racial control through mass incarceration in the United States.² Gilroy reminds us that one in three African American men will experience incarceration in their lifetimes (3), whilst Alexander’s work elaborates on the consequences of this beyond the prison walls. Due to restrictions applied to those convicted of felonies, an:

extraordinary percentage of black men in the United States are legally barred from voting today, just as they have been throughout most of American history. They are also subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service, just as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents once were (1-2).

Alexander reveals the civil rights and social freedoms at stake for those targeted by state-sanctioned racial tyranny: America’s War on Drugs almost unrelentingly targets black men and communities of colour.³ Gilroy, too, remarks that ‘the

buoyancy of the US prison-industrial complex suggests that African American citizenship still awaits its complete and final fulfillment' (3).⁴ Additionally, he opens his address with Barack Obama's statement upon the 2013 acquittal of Floridian teenager Trayvon Martin's killer, signalling the brutality, violence, and injustice perpetrated against black people by the American state that has catalysed activist movements such as Black Lives Matter.⁵ The devastating processes of segregation, ghettoisation, and incarceration as tools of state power, which penetrate the everyday lives of black citizens, can be traced in Gilroy's observations, and will be developed more fully in chapter one.⁶

Gilroy identifies a recognition of a distinctive 'culture of freedom' in the work of C.L.R. James and W.E.B. Du Bois, that was '[b]orne along by musical and other unanticipated vectors, its structures of feeling... transmitted abroad', reaching into the:

lives and imaginations of populations dwelling far from its places of origin who took it up and somehow, mysteriously, made it their own in processes that cannot be understood as forms of theft because culture is not property ("Race" 2).

This transmission is of course part of the intercultural dialectic Gilroy articulates in *The Black Atlantic* as "jewels brought from bondage", and his work is particularly useful to this project because it foregrounds the importance of music. Employing a transnational framework involves the explication of how African American, Black Canadian, and Afro-Caribbean articulations of blackness share and exchange touchstones such as those marking the sonic 'continuum' from the spirituals to hip hop (Brathwaite, *ConVERSations* 313). The study is mindful that each geographical

locus has its own specific local conditions and intensities, and does not seek to collapse black musics into one entity nor use the Black Atlantic framework to ‘essentialize blackness across space and time’ (R. Walcott 165). Therefore, as we proceed to map sites of interest such as New York, Port of Spain, and Vancouver — appropriately, all port cities — it is important to remain sensitive to the critical and cultural landscape contextualising each locus.

The historical significance of music to black culture has its roots in slavery, when the written word was forbidden amongst slaves and punishable by death. Oral traditions thus became an increasingly vital praxis of enculturation, and slave songs functioned as an empowering medium for subversive communications. There has been much research into the legacy of the spirituals, notably by Lauri Ramey (2008), who argues that slave songs should be included in the American and African American poetry canons (1). Ramey characterises slave songs as ‘a metaphorical freedom train... a conceptual space... of poetic liberation in response to... radically constrained circumstances’ (123). Her understanding portrays the African American spirituals as a liberatory practice that gave slaves a way of imagining escape from immense physical, spatial, and temporal restrictions, degradations, and brutalities. Ramey’s synthesis of the work of Kwasi Wiredu, Mark Turner, Pascal Boyer, and Leonard Talmy archives the methods by which slave songs conceptually challenge limits and barriers, underscoring the versatility and power of the spirituals as a resource for African American culture.

The project is girded by the foundational work of postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) and bell hooks’ “Postmodern Blackness” (1990), and critics who have shaped postcolonial thinking, like Frantz

Fanon and Michel Foucault. For example, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) is foundational to the project's analysis of the extent to which the urban landscape is figured as a panoptic structure in diasporic literature, and is implicit in the explication of how the city actualises systems such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racial hegemony. Foucault's work is important to the project's grounding in human geography because of his recognition that power is not inherently negative, and can be an enabling resource, capacity, or strategy: people exercise power in everyday life, just as power works upon them (Gregory 575-576). Therefore, critics should not simply attend to the exercise of power, but how 'power is constructed and deployed... concentrated in certain institutions, relationships or agencies' and crucially, how dynamics of power are shifted or contested (Gregory 575-576). Foucault also influences geographers through the notion that power is heavily territorialized: 'embedded in jurisdictions that run from the human body... and on to the construction of boundaries that express ideas of inclusion and exclusion' (Gregory 576). Buttressing this work is the idea that 'power animates all spatial practices', and is 'most effective when least visible'. The work of cultural and human geographers, then, is to denaturalise dominant discourses (such as whiteness) in order to 'reveal other ways of assembling power and knowledge'. For an emphasis on human geography, and workable distinctions between place and space, the study is indebted to Doreen Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994). Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) is signalled throughout the study, especially in relation to the elaboration of the body schema for black inhabitants in the urban socio-spatial dialectic.⁷ As Bhabha advances that the 'non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a... third space' of borderline experience

(312), hooks favours postmodernist thinking because its discourse of multiplicity allows instead for 'a varied black experience', although she recognises the contribution of identity politics to the formation of a radical black subjectivity (425). Moving on from these texts, this study will attune to the processes of empowered subject formation after identity politics, promoting varied black experience and the reformulation of fixed notions of black identity.

In the years since Gilroy's seminal work, critical debates in black-oriented scholarship have demonstrated a deepening interest in the area of cultural geography, channelling theoretical perspectives such as those proposed in Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974), Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), and Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989). For example, Amy Reddinger's 2009 analysis of James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962) harnesses the work of De Certeau to distinguish between place and space: while place exists 'on a map', space is 'created through lived experience... [and] *layered* with both visible and veiled histories, signs, symbols, and experiences' (Reddinger 117). De Certeau's writings on walking the city, urban layerings, and the spectacle, offer insights that are crucial to the first chapter of this study and its focus on the racial and sexual topographies of New York. Additionally, whilst De Certeau's characterisation of the experience of travelling by train as 'at once incarceration and navigational' is key to my analysis of journeys in Baldwin's *Another Country*, his work on transits through city space also informs my treatment of this journey in terms of the temporal subversion of social and spatial relationships in chapter two (113). The social and the spatial are 'structurally linked spheres' which are essentially dialectic in character and defined by a 'mix of opposition, unity, and

contradiction' according to Soja (77). This project will utilise the advancements made in the field of cultural geography to engage with the socio-spatial dialectic at work in representations of the city and its inhabitants in black transnational literature.

In his work, *Postmodern Cartographies* (1998), psychogeographer Brian Jarvis asks us to reimagine national, urban and domestic spaces by viewing them as a system of meanings: viewing space 'as text' (4). Jarvis harnesses Soja's 1989 work in his discussion of 'how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparent spatiality of social life' (qtd. in Jarvis 44).⁸ As Soja contends: 'Space itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience' (79-80). For Jarvis, the 'concept of a textualised spatiality, [is] one of the key facets of the geographical imagination' (3). Although they concur that language helps to shape our understanding of the city, Maria Balshaw and Liam Kennedy stress 'material, visual and psychic forms and practices that cannot be reduced to textuality' (4). In *Urban Space and Representation* (2000), Balshaw and Kennedy discuss the relationship between space, power, and vision, and express suspicion of 'models that posit the city as analogous to language', citing the perils of decontextualisation and relativism (4). While their concerns are valid, and remind us of Massey's edict on the importance of thinking of space and place in terms of the specific social relations that prevail in those spaces and places (*Space* 1-2), this formation appears to discount the material, visual, and psychic elements that inform and embody textuality — the materiality of language and the corporeal and cognitive processes involved in written production. As Jarvis contends, 'all spaces contain stories and

must be recognised as the site of an ongoing struggle over meaning and value' (7), a struggle often performed through textualities.

Henri Lefebvre writes that considerations of the body are important to an understanding of social space, as 'social practice presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members and sensory organs', and argues that: 'Localization can absolutely not be taken for granted where the lived experience of the body is concerned' (40). Steve Pile notes that 'Lefebvre chooses 'the body' and 'the city' to exemplify the production of space', in which the body and the city are unfolded as 'cartographies of meaning and identity' (174, 178).⁹ Yet Pile also reminds us of Lefebvre's 'insistence that the (total) body should be reduced to one sense: sight', a focus that denies the multiplicities of the body (179).¹⁰ Western thought has traditionally conflated understanding with seeing, and Balshaw and Kennedy claim that '[u]rbanism privileges, even as it distorts, vision and the visual' (7). Their work explicates how the urban inhabitant is interpellated as urban subject, and suggests that 'questions of (il)legibility and (in)visibility are implicated' as struggles for power and identity in representations of the city, because urban space — 'hierarchical, zoned, segregated, gated' — 'encodes both freedoms and restrictions — of mobility, of access, of vision — in the city' (11). Visuality is associated with the reifying effects of the white gaze, and with the panoptic surveillance of black inhabitants of the city. This, along with a correspondence between the inheritance of the spirituals and notions of freedom, expression, and resistance, has led to the mythologizing of music in approaches to black culture. Emily Lordi designates this as 'the *music-text hierarchy*' which 'establishes a binary opposition between "(black) orality" and "(white) literacy," while privileging music over writing as the

more immediate, authentic form of expression' (18). In *Black Resonance* (2013), Lordi's aim is to denaturalise this privileging of musical and oral forms as 'immediate, authentic' modes of black expression. Additionally, Lordi references Anthony Heilbut's work on gospel to argue that the:

notion that black music indexes the "unspeakable" or that which "words can't begin to tell you" should signal a beginning, "an intensification and a concern" not an answer or an end point to discussions of black music (135).

The texts studied here offer representations of the ways in which subjects shape urban environments by how they move through, negotiate, and render the city, both somatically and through rhetoric. The works are invested with visual, sonic, and kinetic schemas; through such blended and synaesthetic modalities, they trace the visual rhythms of the urban landscape, demolishing boundaries between schemas and dismantling binary categories as they spotlight and architect the temporal, spatial, and sonorous interstices of the city.

The following chapters trace the chords and coordinates of transnational literary cartographies in black-authored texts. Chapter one focuses on the work of James Baldwin — primarily his novel *Another Country* (1962) and essay collection *The Price of the Ticket* (1985), along with other key works that evidence his sustained and committed portrayals of race and racism in America across his career, including the short story "Going to Meet the Man" (1965), the essay "Fifth Avenue, Uptown" (1960), and his final novel *Just Above My Head* (1979). As a self-styled "trans-atlantic commuter" (Standley and Pratt 15), Baldwin combines the experiences of exile and engagement to inform a reconfiguration of African American identity and interpellation in his work. In the essay "Dark Days" (1985),

Baldwin writes: 'A black boy born in New York's Harlem in 1924 was born of Southerners who had but lately been driven from land, and therefore was born into a southern community' (659). Thus any treatment of the psychogeographical terrain of Baldwin's New York necessitates an engagement with southern sites of racial trauma, and this is how the chapter begins, revealing the layered racial and sexual histories which follow and work upon migrants and their children, who must face the challenges of 'the hard pavements of a hostile city' (*PT* 661). This study does not seek to polarise the northern and southern United States, and instead situates them within a network of historical legacies and spatial politics. Contemporary critics such as Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn challenge any binary categorisation of the North and South, positioning 'the study of the South in a hemispheric context' in order to 'open the critical gaze to "the kind of border-crossing, interracial hybridity that white southern nativism has sought to repress"' (K. Anderson 200-201). Although an analysis of Southern literature is beyond the scope of this study, it is interesting to note that its resituation in terms of global contexts, rather than in binary opposition to the North, has led to a resurgence of critical interest in literature of the American South.

The mapping of the Great Migration and its impact on the evolution of black music frames a discussion of Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992) in chapter three. Farah Jasmine Griffin describes *Jazz* as 'Morrison's most explicit migration narrative', and suggests that Morrison's text ushers in a new direction for traditional migration narratives like Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) by 'introduc[ing] a new notion of the ancestor' (184). In *Jazz*, Morrison explicitly links the Traces journey to the city with that of the 'million more' who were part of the 'wave of black people running from

want and violence [which] crested in the 1870s; the '80s; the '90s' and was a 'steady stream in 1906 when Joe and Violet joined it' (33). As Griffin notes, Joe and Violet become 'part of a thriving, throbbing black crowd... [who] possess and reshape language' (188). However, '[e]ven when not visible, a white presence controls and restrains the possibility of Harlem' (188). Such limitations are apparent in the space of the train on its journey to the city, which enforces segregation in the dining cars until they approach New York. This segregation is embodied in the 'green-as-poison curtain' that divides the dining car (31). Even when this curtain is pushed aside, indicating the relaxation of segregation rules, the attendant cannot convince black passengers to enter the dining car: 'skirting the City, there were no green curtains; the whole car could be full of colored people... If only they would' (31). This suggests that the ghost of these restrictions follow the passengers into, and operate within, the City; they continue to control and haunt the black migrant population in the North, as Griffin concludes: 'This "free, safe" space is neither free nor safe' (188).

Morrison's *Jazz* and Baldwin's *Another Country* share a jazz aesthetic and an explication of the processes of ghettoisation, segregation, and incarceration embedded in the psychogeographic terrain of the panoptic cityscape, the legacy of that journey northwards. The occupants of Baldwin and Morrison's New York are regarded by the animate agency of the white gaze and central characters in each text give themselves to death — indeed, Anna Kérchy insists that both texts are funeral songs for a character who dies or is dead at the beginning of the novel (40). In his 1966 essay "The Changing Same", Amiri Baraka declares New Black Music to be the 'direct expression of place' (205), which can take the listener 'on a trip' to a

‘place where Black People live’ and ‘move in almost absolute openness and strength’ (*Black* 213). Furthermore, Baraka ‘identifies jazz as a physical space, a region inhabited by African Americans’ which Keren Omry likens to the space of Morrison’s *Jazz* pages (26). However, Baldwin and Morrison each employ a different spatial focus as they delineate the boundaries of the city: while Baldwin’s jazz drummer Rufus traverses Manhattan from the book’s first pages, ‘starting at Times Square, going uptown, then down to Greenwich Village to visit Vivaldo, and finally up to Harlem’ (Omry 28), Morrison’s characters populate a distinctly black city space with Lenox Avenue at its heart, ‘that part of the City — which is the part they came for’ (*Jazz* 51). Omry argues convincingly that the function of music in Baldwin’s text allows for the possibility of interracial community, while Morrison’s use of improvisation and multiple points of reference suggests ‘a more introspective cohesiveness within African American experience’ (30), reflecting this difference in spatial focus through jazz structures, intimating its habitable dimensions and suggesting its power to transform individuals and spaces.

In their introduction to *The Auditory Culture Reader* (2004), Michael Bull and Les Back contend that the regulation of time and space has historically been achieved through the use of sound, and cite church bells as an example of this organising principle. Furthermore, they insist on the continued significance of this in the modern era, stressing that a ‘polyphony of sounds increasingly regulates and is regulated by us as we move through daily life’ (5-6). Griffin likens this increase in sonic polyphony to developments in the urban blues genre, as blues men and women reflected a transition in the experience of time and space, exemplified by the pace of the city, in their music. Such musical migrations are mapped in Baraka’s

“Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine” (1958), and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952), in which the experience of time and space is shaped by environment and can be channelled and challenged through sonic intervention and innovation. Via the modality of musical vibration, these texts embody a dynamic conception of time, a “sounding line” (Compton, *Bluesprint* 14) that travels across the American landscape and exerts a postbody phenomenology of presence through amplification and simultaneity — as in Baraka’s narrator’s occupation of the same temporal and spatial coordinates as his deceased grandfather, and *Invisible Man*’s descent through temporal gaps and vinyl grooves to converse with the singer of the spirituals, each elaborated in chapter two. This sounding line of vibration extends through African American works such as Baldwin’s *Another Country* and Toni Cade Bambara’s *The Salt Eaters* (1980), Black Canadian texts such as Wayde Compton’s *Performance Bond* (2004), Esi Edugyan’s *Half Blood Blues* (2011), and the spoken word performances of Antiguan-Québécoise Tanya Evanson’s “The African All of It” in 2013 and Caribbean-Canadian Clifton Joseph’s “Poem for John Coltrane” in 2007, intimating the porousness of the Canadian-US border and the resonance of “overlapping diasporas” (Edwards, *Practice* 13), allowing for a transcendence of temporal and spatial barriers across American, Canadian, and Caribbean topographies.

The texts examined in chapter two utilise the phonograph and/or other symbols for the transgression of spatial and temporal boundaries; this is implied by the title of Baraka’s story, as sorrow (like the sorrow songs) is invested with the capacity for time travel, while Baldwin’s A-train accelerates across the city through portals akin to black holes in space-time. In her novel *The Salt Eaters*, set in the

fictional town of Claybourne, Georgia, Bambara's engagement with such imagery includes domestic symbols like the hourglass. Significantly, Bambara's use of the hourglass speaks to an alternate conception of time to that of the temporal itemisation signified by the clock. Raoul Vaneigem laments the commodification of 'snapshot' time, in which people are 'walking chronometers', observing that:

In the Middle Ages time *flowed* — though it was always the same sand that passed back and forth between the two bulbs of the hourglass. As represented on the circular clock face, by contrast, time is dispensed unit by unit, and never returns (225-226).

Like Vaneigem's distinction between cyclical and "wrist-watch" time, temporal evolution in the migration narrative is suggested not only via rhythms and language, but denoted by symbols of modernity and shifts in patterns of work. Griffin highlights the significance of Richard Wright's work because '[h]is migrants are not only thrown into an unfamiliar space, but they are also in an unfamiliar time' (69). In *Native Son* (1940), for example, the 'first sound of the novel is the famous elongated "BRING!" that... frames Wright's novel itself as a jarring wake-up call to white America' (Lordi 33). As well as the spatial dimensions of the Great Migration, time and modernity are important to an understanding of the migrant psyche, and the power of the city to affect it.

In "Marseilles" (1928), Walter Benjamin develops this notion of the sonic control of the experience of time to include kinetic schemas:

The special sense of a city maybe no longer is given by tower-clocks and church-bells — by sounds, that is, which tell time — but rather by those that tell of motion. The peculiar sounds of transit are the signature tunes of modern cities. These are sounds that remind us the city is a sort of machine (qtd. in Tonkiss 306).

Benjamin's description of the sounds of transit in the city-as-machine points to the transportive and transformative capacities of the sonic environment. Additionally, there is a posthumanist sensibility in Benjamin's stress on the evolution of auditory culture, its sounds emerging from the cityscape rather than from nature. This is reminiscent of R. Murray Schafer's blending of the sonic and landscape in his seminal work, *The New Soundscape* (1969), which invents the term 'schizophonia' to explain the anxiety of the severance of sound from a phenomenology of physical presence. This severance is inherent to sound recording technologies through their capture and preservation of 'the tissue of living sound' (44). The second half of chapter two investigates the implications of this stripping of the voice from the body for human subjectivity, with a particular focus on Compton's "schizophonophilia".

Posthumanist thought aids chapter two's focus on how sound recording technologies such as the phonograph and turntable enact cultural interventions and radical experiments of identity through the practice of stripping away, spinning, and splicing sounds — especially the sound of the human voice. Posthumanism is important to this discussion because its proponents 'regard their own being as embodied in an extended technological world' (Pepperell 187), impacting the spatial dimensions of human experience. Furthermore, posthumanism is not simply concerned with a kind of technologizing of human capabilities, but it decentres the human from its ontologies, interrogating 'how we conduct our exploitation of the environment, animals and each other' (Pepperell 171). This decentring is not tantamount to a denigration of humanity in the posthumanist worldview, nor does

it signal the eclipse of the human by mechanical systems: in his study of the *Posthuman Condition*, Robert Pepperell identifies a posthuman impulse in some of the most radical and critical movements that seek to improve life on our shared planet: feminism, animal rights, environmentalism, and anti-slavery.

Posthumanism's importance to these movements rest in the revolution of the 'humanist belief in a natural human essence which exists outside history, politics, and social relations' (Badmington, "Approaching" 5). Instead, posthumanism's concern with how the human evolves in conjunction and cooperation with other life forms, technologies, and ecosystems, 'sees the human as an instantiation of connections, linkages, and crossings' (Nayar 796). In literature (especially in Science Fiction and Gothic texts), posthuman life forms can be cyborgs, ghosts, or non-human entities such as monsters or zombies, and these figures manifest in various guises throughout this study — for example, when the deceased characters that are the keystones of Baldwin's *Another Country* and Morrison's *Jazz* perform non-corporeal intrusions in the text (through hauntings, music, and photographs). Indeed, both the spectral figure and sound recording technologies act as what I will call *postbody* projections: they exist beyond, but can be an extension of, the body and its capacities.

The *postbody* is articulated throughout the study in two crucial, sometimes overlapping, ways: firstly, I am interested in fusions of the physical and the ghostly, a synthesis that can be better understood alongside Wiredu's concept of quasi-materialism. Wiredu's work is important here because in many of the texts these spectral projections can be invocations of ancestral memory. Wiredu explains how in West African systems of thought, the ancestor is a "quasi-material" presence

unconstrained by 'the laws that govern human motion and physical interaction' (*Cultural* 125). The ancestor lives beyond the river (separate from, but sharing the same earthly realm as, the living), can cross great distances in space and time, and is able to inhabit the body of the descendant. In the context of this study, Wiredu's concept of quasi-materialism can be traced in the temporal and spatial subversions of Baraka's "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine", and enjoys its most powerful articulation in Morrison's *Jazz* narrator, whose omniscient presence in the streets of Harlem defies traditional narrative limitations.

Secondly, I argue that the phonograph serves as a kind of mechanical postbody that transmits sound across and acoustically challenges spatial, temporal, and body boundaries. This discussion is influenced by the work of N. Katherine Hayles, who in "Voices Out of Bodies, Bodies Out of Voices" (1997) compares the mechanical manipulation of sounds to the aleatory Burroughs/Gysin cut-up technique. In chapter two, Esi Edugyan's experiments with the phonograph culminate in the scoring of gaps into the vinyl of a recording by her Baltimorean jazz narrator Sid Griffiths, but the trope of the gap is consistently developed throughout the novel to articulate the rending of time and space caused by war in Europe. She shapes jazz as a vehicle for moving around and living within the city, and for creating community among the transnational gathering of jazz musicians.

Edugyan's narrator describes the narrative as a ghost story, and the study will uncover the ways in which each of these novels, stories, and poems are haunted by gaps, postbody spectres, and the ghosts of ancestors. The texts cited above allow for an engagement with postbody poetics and the notion of posthuman sound, whilst Evanson and Joseph embody their performances, stressing the sensory, the

physical manipulation of muscles, and the movement of limbs, in a kinetic articulation of spoken word performance. In their performances, Evanson and Joseph's bodies are shaped by the impulses and intensities of jazz and antiphony; they each shift, to differing degrees, the semantic order of spoken word performance to the body. Their embodied practice kinetically responds to and relays transmission of the vibrations heard, felt, recorded, and transposed by Baraka, Baldwin, Ellison, Bambara, Compton, and Edugyan, communicating the sounding line that travels backwards and forwards through time and across landscapes.

Compton's experimental work with the dub plate and his efforts to reroute the Black Atlantic to forge a 'Black Pacific node of the black diaspora' (Smyth 390) allows for a comparative analysis of African American and Black Canadian literature and the mapping of bodies, space, time, and sound. I retain Heather Smyth's phrasing to signal Ellison's text, which emphasises the *nodes* of time forged by Louis Armstrong's jazz music: 'those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead' (Ellison 8). Compton's "The Reinventing Wheel", from his collection *Performance Bond*, negotiates these temporal gaps and fissures at the specific site of the dub plate. Compton's poem is invested with canonical allusions to modernists like Ezra Pound and with Yoruban figures like Shango, taking inspiration from Kamau Brathwaite. At a 2013 reading, Compton describes the poem as an attempt to 'take apart hip hop and rebuild something', collecting 'shards' of culture and of sound, assembling a vocabulary that reflects a useable history for those of mixed race subjectivity on the West Coast of Canada — an outpost of diasporic experience ("Reinventing"). Compton directs a revolutionary multimodality in his

description of the interaction between body and postbody as he manipulates his recorded (disembodied) voice with his hands by spinning, scratching, and cutting his voice with samples in a poetic practice he defines as sonic enjambment (*After 198*) and a process he likens to the situationist practice of *détournement* (192).¹¹

In her work on Jamaican dub and reggae, Loretta Collins argues that national identity is partially constructed from auditory culture, taken from the natural world, local industry, percussive sounds, the human voice, or the proliferation of sound technologies, as seen with the phonograph in chapter two (169-170). Chapter three offers a comparative analysis of Morrison's *Jazz* and Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), and gives critical attention to Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Derek Walcott's "Names" (1976), Kamau Brathwaite's "Islands" (1969), and Nathaniel Mackey's "On Antiphon Island" (2006), each of which forges a portal for a kinetic correspondence between auralities and landscape. A comparative analysis of the work of Morrison and Lovelace is useful for this project because they each depict the urban environment through the employment of sonic structures and schemas. Lovelace's novel is invested with the cadences of calypso and the kinesis of carnival, while Morrison's text features interplaying voices, a non-chronological order, and repetition and rupture, its composition threaded by extended jazz riffs (Rice 135). The study traces the tensions suggested by the careful design of Morrison's Harlem, its orderly city streets 'mindful of where you want to go' (9) and masking a sinister panoptic presence, and the neglected pavements of Calvary Hill, its citizens holding their poverty 'as a possession' (2), an ironic depiction of how colonial power maintains its grip on post-independence Trinidad. Additionally, each novel offers a sonic and kinetic elegy to an ancestral past. Lauri Ramey's research

on slave songs is particularly pertinent to the first half of this chapter, whilst Brathwaite and Mackey's writings on limbo as memorial informs the second. Alan Rice notes that memorialising the slave trade often begins at an 'imagined site of ancestral departure from the homeland', figured as the 'Door of No Return' (2), and identifies jazz as African Atlantic memorial in Morrison's work (102). Aldon Lynn Nielsen's *Integral Music* (2004) situates the Middle Passage 'as the 'X' that marks the spot of both origin and sea burial, vanishing point of horizons both coming and going' (xiii). Rice and Nielsen both situate the ocean as a liminal space, and "Crossing the Water" emerges as the focus of chapter three, a bifurcated chapter that figures Black Atlantic soundscapes as both a living 'aural memorial' and celebration of survival (Rice 137).

In addition to exploring Compton's work in chapter two in relation to the phonograph, Compton's wider project to cultivate an assertive Afroperipheralism is examined in chapter four. The chapter navigates Compton's poetry and prose collections alongside the work of Nova Scotian writer George Elliott Clarke in the context of Black Canada's battle against erasure and elision, both from the Canadian imaginary and critical frameworks such as Gilroy's Black Atlantic. Compton and Clarke each recuperate urban space and restore obscured and obstructed histories of racial violence in Canada, contending with Canadian culture's dominant metanarratives of wilderness and nordicity. Along with *Performance Bond*, Compton's poetry and prose collections *49th Parallel Psalm* (1999) and *The Outer Harbour* (2014) are vital to the concerns of this project because his work implicitly answers Gilroy's call in *Darker than Blue* (2010) for a critical engagement with pressing contemporary concerns such as economic crisis,

post 9/11 politics, ongoing warfare, human rights debate, and environmental degradation (5). Additionally, Compton works with multiple inheritances of the Black Atlantic and Black Pacific, explicitly drawing attention to how they intersect and share and exchange touchstones, assisting an examination of African American, Black Canadian, and Afro-Caribbean literary cartographies within a transnational framework. Compton engages with the work of theorists that are central to the concerns of this project's explication of space and time, such as Brathwaite's tidalectics and Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958), which provides an epigraph to Compton's collection of short stories. He is in dialogue with writers and critics like Clarke himself, enabling analysis of the emergence and development of Black Canadian cultural theory.

Writing from their bicoastal locations of British Columbia and Nova Scotia (and Ontario, where Clarke is the presiding poet laureate of Toronto), Compton and Clarke are 'active participants in the cultural construction of the worlds they inhabit' (MacLeod 242). In *George and Rue* (2005) and *Execution Poems* (2001), Clarke shapes the spaces of Atlantic Canada through a synaesthetic indexing of the Hamilton brothers' rhizomatic journeys from province to province, moving between the key sites of Halifax, Fredericton, and Montréal. Clarke employs jazz to articulate the operations of power in city space and to interrogate notions of freedom in the urban environment as the brothers endure an imposed state of exile, flux, and disenfranchisement from the pleasures of home. Moving through spaces in which (or from which) they are ghettoised, segregated, incarcerated, and finally executed for the murder of a taxi driver, their psychogeographical excursions are a vehicle for Clarke to explicate the extent to which the brothers 'have the right

to depart, but not the right to arrive somewhere' (Fraile): they live tracing the city limits and die at its centre.

Using models from black transnationalism, psychogeography, and posthumanist discourse, this study is organised so that chapters develop accretively, tracing how cities are mapped through visual and sonic schemas; temporal and spatial modalities are disrupted and the denaturalisation of sound is articulated; ancestral memory is invoked through sonic intervention, proposing an antiphonal relationship to the kinetic cityscape; and advancing that porous and liminal configurations of nation, culture, and identity achieve a revolutionary debordering of space. In the texts selected for study, body, time, and space are sonorous entities that can be understood through cartography, a mechanism for making sense of environments we experience somatically. The city is the locus where body blends with postbody projections and blurs with kinetic movement, where it dances, sings, speaks, walks, looks, listens, and breathes, where temporal and spatial boundaries are transgressed, subverted, leapt over, plucked like an instrument, or versioned like a jazz standard, allowing for metamorphoses, for shifting, liminal identity formations. The visual, sonic, and kinetic aspects of the texts shatter implied binaries, employing synaesthetic schemas to create visual rhythms that architect the urban landscape, positing a reciprocal relationship between urban body and urban text. Thus, the study underscores the somatic quality of written, oral, and musical forms, and proposes a blended topography of mimetic performance, a landscape innovatively *traversed* by bodies shaped by jazz.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One

“HERE BE DRAGONS”: THE TYRANNY OF THE CITYSCAPE

IN JAMES BALDWIN’S INTIMATE CARTOGRAPHIES

“Here Be Dragons” takes its title from James Baldwin’s 1985 essay, in which he dismantles the binary categories of American identity politics and transgresses the gendered and racialised boundaries of New York City. Chapter one examines the ways in which Baldwin composes the urban scene in his essay collection *The Price of the Ticket* (1985), third novel *Another Country* (1962), and other texts that map the socio-spatial relationships at work in domestic, street, and blended urban spaces. Through the dynamic use of a metaphorical “beat”, complex image schemas, and intricate geometries, Baldwin’s depiction of black life in the city creates a vivid cartography of New York’s psychogeographic terrain, the city’s levels, planes, and perspectives directing the movements of its citizens. The chapter connects Baldwin’s mappings of New York to an imbricated visual and sonic conception of urban subjectivity; that is, how the subject is constructed through both a visual/scopic and an aural/sonic relation to the city.

Chapter Two

GHOSTS IN THE PHONOGRAPH: TURNTABLES, TIME MACHINES, AND THE POSTBODY POETIC

IN AFRICAN AMERICAN AND BLACK CANADIAN LITERATURE AND ORATURE

“Ghosts in the Phonograph” traces a sounding line of interconnection through the works of Amiri Baraka, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Toni Cade Bambara, suggesting a disruption of topographies of time and space figured through the symbolic use of the phonograph and other sonic schemas. In these texts the sounding line can act as time machine, invoke the dead, and constitute interconnection between the (post)body and landscape. The second part of the chapter analyses Wayde Compton’s turntable poetry to extend and contemporalise the metaphorical use of the phonograph, along with the work of Esi Edugyan, Tanya Evanson, and Clifton Joseph. In each of these works there is an emphasis upon the role of the body (and postbody) in the production of sound. This chapter engages with posthumanist thought to advance that the phonograph’s folding of time and space enables the movement of the postbody, challenging geographical and historical barriers and paradigms.

Chapter Three

CROSSING THE WATER: PORTALS, ISLANDS, AND KINESIS

IN THE BLACK ATLANTIC SOUNDSCAPE

“Crossing the Water” identifies a spatial and temporal threshold conjured through spiritual and jazz music in the African American soundscape, and through calypso and carnival codes in Caribbean performance. Each articulates the movement of the body through space and time, invoking ancestral memory and reviving kinetic, quasi-material manifestations of the ancestral figure. Focusing on Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* (1992) and Earl Lovelace’s *The Dragon Can’t Dance* (1979), chapter three proposes that the sweeping soundscapes of Morrison’s City and Lovelace’s Hill delineate the borders and portals of Harlem, New York, and Port of Spain, Trinidad. Carnival’s projection into city space engenders possibilities for a renewed relationship to the landscape and emphasises the agencies of the body, while Morrison’s polyvocal opus offers a palimpsestic narrative structure further suggestive of the processes of migration and synthesis. The chapter demonstrates how slippages through kinetic portals intimate a porousness that mimetically challenges physical, social, and imaginative barriers and conceives a revolutionary debordering of city space.

*Chapter Four*GAP IN THE MAP: WRITING THE RAZED CITIES AND POROUS BORDERS
OF AFRICADIA AND BLACK PACIFIC CANADA

“Gap in the Map” explicates how Wayde Compton’s Black British Columbian and George Elliott Clarke’s Africadian poetics map, transform, and establish new geographies. The chapter examines the reclamation of black urban space and the formation of Black Canadian cartographies of identity through which Clarke and Compton retrieve histories of denied racial violences and contest a limited critical allowance for Canadian blackness. In his novel *George and Rue* (2005) and suite of *Execution Poems* (2001), Clarke’s narrative propels through sites such as Halifax, Fredericton, and Montréal, revealing the notion of freedom to be illusory as the Hamilton brothers negotiate borderlines penetrated, for example, by American jazz sounds. In his poetry and prose collections *Performance Bond* (2004) and *The Outer Harbour* (2014), Compton emphasises crossings and palimpsests, translating the inheritances of the Black Atlantic into Pacific space, invoking an interstitial threshold for identity like the portal marked by Legba’s *vévé*.

“Here Be Dragons”: The Tyranny of the Cityscape

in James Baldwin’s Intimate Cartographies

The silhouette of the New York City skyline projects a dominant presence in the work of James Baldwin, even in those texts set elsewhere. Baldwin’s Harlem childhood and adolescence are well documented, both in his own essays, particularly “Dark Days”, collected in *The Price of the Ticket* (1985), and by biographers such as David Leeming and Herb Boyd, forming an established fixture of the Baldwin mythology. Enduringly conceived as the mecca of Black America within the nexus of black transnational culture, Harlem’s place in Baldwin’s textual cityscape has been subject to multiple interpretations: Baldwin is accused of abandoning Harlem, failing to celebrate it, homogenising its inhabitants and exploiting its deprivation. In *Baldwin’s Harlem* (2008), for example, Boyd asserts that Harlem was treated ‘variously’ in Baldwin’s writing, ‘though generally with neglect’ (38). In contrast to his debut novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), set firmly in the Harlem streets in which he grew up and threaded with retrospective narratives of the rural South, Baldwin’s second novel, *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), takes place largely in Paris and reflects the author’s affinity for the French capital; Harlem ‘is a long-ago memory and isn’t mentioned at all’ (Boyd 129). However, Boyd also notes how ‘[e]lements of the community were often profoundly interwoven’ in Baldwin’s writings and speeches, concluding that ‘[l]ike the sundry other paradoxes that gripped him, Baldwin’s love and disdain for his native Harlem was pressured into dissimilar forms’ (59). Boyd’s thesis suggests moreover that, even where Harlem is not specified by name, its presence can be felt in Baldwin’s

work. In a 1984 *Paris Review* interview, Baldwin notes that 'the genesis of *Giovanni's Room* is in America' and reveals that the titular character appeared in an early draft of what would later become *Another Country* (1962), suggesting an evolution of the project from New York origins. French cities also feature in *Another Country* — Eric begins a romance with Yves in Paris, and it is in Chartres that they become lovers. Despite the intimacy Eric and Yves find there, the cathedral of Chartres acts as the skyscrapers of New York, personified and oddly omnipresent: 'everywhere the cathedral pursued them. It is impossible to be in that town and not be in the shadow of those great towers' (186). Baldwin employs a signature image schema to describe the 'great towers' as a stifling and suffocating presence, blotting out the light. Baldwin's descriptions suggest a reading of the European landscape from a perspective informed by his experiences documented in "Dark Days", as a 'black boy born in New York's Harlem in 1924... of Southerners who had but lately been driven from land' (659). The cathedral is 'an affliction' on the city, 'frozen in its history', Baldwin suggests, like towns in the American South (186).

At the time of his birth, Baldwin's mother, Emma Berdis Jones, was newly arrived in Harlem from Maryland 'along with that multitude of migrants, "blues people" from the South who were fleeing Jim Crow, the Klan, and a horde of other social and political demons' that threatened the safety and wellbeing of African Americans (Boyd 4). In his summary of Baldwin's beginnings, Boyd aligns his early experiences with those of millions of other African American families who migrated from the southern states to northern urban centres between 1910 and 1930; Baldwin's personal history becomes part of what Farah Jasmine Griffin terms "the

migration narrative". Griffin argues that, although sociological and historical literature is inclined to cite economic reasons as the primary motivating factor in black migration (17), the migration narrative portrays the impetus as rooted in violence: lynching, and later, the sexual exploitation of black women, a factor which begins to surface in work such as Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (Griffin 37). In "Dark Days", Baldwin summarises these factors, stating that migrants were 'driven' North by the 'sheer impossibility of remaining in the South', while for their children came the challenges of 'the hard pavements of a hostile city' (661). The spectre of violence in the migration narrative is a thread that twists through many works by artists, writers, musicians, and dramatists who focus on racial hostility and segregation in northern cities.

Boyd's characterisation of Baldwin's relationship to Harlem as paradoxical is common among critics. Whilst Baldwin 'reiterated on numerous occasions that "New York... is my big city... because I was born there and grew up there"', and described Harlem as one of the only places he felt at home in the world (Standley and Pratt 49, 107), he also viewed Harlem as:

a powerful emblem of how black citizens have been systematically excluded from the promises of American life and trapped into a ghetto which he described as "some enormous, cunning, and murderous beast, ready to devour, impossible to escape" (Hakutani and Butler 14).

Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Butler reference Baldwin's description of New York (rather than Harlem in particular) in the short story "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon", first published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1960, and collected in *Going to Meet the Man* (1965). This is the city as perceived by the first person narrator as his ship

approaches harbour in 'the great, unfinished city', who imagines 'being floated into danger' (162). Baldwin's affiliation with Harlem as an identity-affirming locus — as home — does not blind him to the realities of its socio-economic and political position in the national context. His work demonstrates a recognition of the interpellation of African Americans as subjects occupying the place designated 'for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence' by prevailing capitalist, patriarchal, and racial power structures concretised in the architecture of the American city — here, New York (Althusser 178). Many critical interpretations linger on this perceived paradox, speaking largely in the 'double braid' of binaries (Cixous 63), or in terms of 'ambivalence or animosity', a habit that Charles Scruggs characterises as a 'trap' (Rev. 341). Hakutani asserts, for example that:

He has been both extolled and denounced for his unique vision of racial harmony in America... he is not only an eloquent writer but an acute historian. Modern American society is predominantly urban; black and white people live and work together in the city (150).

An undercurrent of polarising dichotomies taints the above extract and culminates in a black/white binary paradigm of race. In a contrasting style, Yasmin Y. Degout argues that in his essay "Here Be Dragons", originally published in *Playboy* in 1985 under the title "Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood", Baldwin 'simultaneously reconstructs and destroys the host of primary labels that constitute the mythology of American identity politics' (129). Degout's essay highlights the importance of an intersectional reading of gendered and racialised representations: she designates "Going to Meet the Man" as Baldwin's 'most obvious, focused, and pointed treatment of the links between racial and sexual constructs' (139). In the

story, the focal character, Jesse, is a white Southern male who becomes sexually aroused after recollecting the torture, lynching, and castration of an unnamed black male character, a scene he witnessed in his youth. The murder of the black man is attended by the town's white families and is described as a picnic. Here, Degout stresses, the violated black body is:

identified not as an individual but as a racial and sexual category, a body made sexual not only in its nudity but also through the very act of castration that also signals... the threat of this race-sex category (139).

The reduction of Baldwin's nameless and symbolically un-sexed black male character to a race-sex category highlights the danger of an ideology which operates through binary paradigms such as those Baldwin exposes here and in his essay "Here Be Dragons". By the end of the story, the black man is 'merely, a black charred object on the black, charred ground' (248). Crucially, "Going to Meet the Man" exemplifies the 'racial and sexual economies that inform and construct Baldwin's rendering of space' (Reddinger 128). Baldwin's story is set against the background of the Civil Rights Movement and activism in the South; as he writes the racial and sexual nightmare of Southern US history into the story, he highlights the spatial dynamics of black oppression.

Griffin argues that the power of the South 'infiltrates black bodies, leaving them dismembered' (16). Her analysis of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" (1939) elucidates the connection between the corporeal lynched figure and Southern soil, and stresses a link between lynching and fear of black economic independence and franchise (43). As a police officer in Baldwin's story, Jesse patrols the registration of black voters, and conceives of himself as a soldier at war. Talking about a

colleague, but in a pointed reference to historic segregation laws, Jesse tells his wife 'they wouldn't stay where Big Jim C. wanted them' (232) — Sheriff "Big Jim" Clark had harassed Baldwin during his activist work in Selma, Alabama in 1963 (Leeming 229). Jesse reflects that they could have burned down the houses of the black population: 'if their town had been laid out like some towns in the North... they could have kept the fire in one place' (237). Here Baldwin's work invokes the psychogeographic turmoil of the migration narrative, and highlights how the 'interlocking orders of white racism and urban-industrial capitalism' fuelled discrimination and 'produced segregation, ghettoisation and incarceration' (Jarvis 113). Brian Jarvis frames this as an extension of the 'dislocations of the diaspora [which] were followed by centuries of formal sociospatial apartheid under slavery' (113). The following reading of Baldwin's essays will analyse his representations of the production of segregation, ghettoisation, and incarceration in the city through visual and sonic regimes, and suggest how these borderlines impinge upon the movements and freedoms of black urbanites.

Although a sense of ambivalence may be discernible in Baldwin's writings on Harlem, a more complex critical response involves an analysis of socio-spatial relationships, cognitive maps, and an intersectional reading of class, gender, and race, an approach called for by critics such as Scruggs (Rev. 341). Jarvis foregrounds space/place/landscape as ongoing processes, a spatial praxis 'central to any analysis of the geographical imagination' (6). He employs Derek Gregory's definition of spatial structure to remind us that space is 'not merely an arena *in which* social life unfolds but a medium *through which* social life is produced and reproduced' (qtd. in Jarvis 7).¹ This reading allows us to interpret Baldwin's portrayal of Harlem not just

as an ‘emblem’ for African American disenfranchisement, but of Harlem as a socio-spatial mechanism for African American exclusion ‘from the promises of American life’ (Hakutani and Butler 14). For Jarvis, space/place/landscape are inextricably connected to class, capital, gender, and race, and these concerns are vital to an understanding of the geographical imagination in postmodern culture. Through this lens, space/place/landscape are not just the stage for, but become the mode of, operations of power.² For these reasons, I employ spatial theory in the following reading of Baldwin’s work, viewing it through the psychogeographic lens of Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1958), and Guy Debord’s “Theory of the *Dérive*” (1958), and informed by Frantz Fanon’s foundational essay “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” (1952). I select the term “psychogeography” from spatial theory carefully, for, while it is linked to Debord’s situationism and *flânerie*, the concept suggests both the pull and repulsion of urban terrain and what is at stake for the walker of the city, foregrounding the psychological implications of crossing the boundaries and borderlines of the structured and hierarchical cityscape.

This chapter will argue that the visual, sonic, and kinetic aspects of Baldwin’s texts shatter implied binaries; his synaesthetic schemas architect the urban landscape and articulate the rhythms of New York, positing a reciprocal relationship between urban body and urban text. Literary cartographies offer a way of making sense of environments we experience somatically; by privileging the body and its senses in my analysis, I aim to temper the more abstract proclivities of spatial theory by stressing human geography – in other words, understanding urban space as social construct. Steve Pile notes that:

topographies of mind, body and city, while not being irreducible to one another, are mapped through citation of one another; just as topographies of subjectivity, meaning and power — such as class, gender, race, sexuality and so on — are mapped through resonance and dissonance with one another (181).

Pile extends mapping to the spaces of the (gendered, racialised) body and mind as they function in the city, whilst his phrasing lexically implicates sonic schemas in topographies of psychic, bodily, and city spaces in his reference to resonance and dissonance. He figures the meaning and power of topographies of subjectivity in a system of signification suggestive of intersectionality. Baldwin’s treatment of issues of class, sexuality, and race betrays an indelible preoccupation with the operations of American power structures and how they impact people trying to love one another in the city. Far from being negligent, Baldwin’s writing offers its readers some of the most compelling and intense portrayals of New York’s psychogeographic landscape, as he maps the resonances and dissonances of city life.

The Price of the Ticket and the Bond of the Unusual Door

In *The Price of the Ticket*, Baldwin’s highly personalised accounts of growing up in Harlem and living in New York map the socio-spatial relationships at work in domestic, street, and blended urban space, particularly in the title essay, “Dark Days”, and “Here Be Dragons”. “Here Be Dragons” offers the central cartographic conceit this chapter takes as its premise, as Baldwin redefines and reshapes our understanding of urban territories. Baldwin’s essay represents a capitalist,

patriarchal, and racialised American ideology entrenched in and limited by a binary view of the world. His insights are characterised by the use of potent imagery and a reconfiguration of African American identity and interpellation. As well as exploring/exploding the urban construct of racial boundaries, the essay is a treatise on androgyny. Baldwin is highly critical of American ideals of sexuality and masculinity: 'This ideal has created cowboys and Indians, good guys and bad guys... butch and faggot, black and white' (678). Here, Baldwin roots America's gendered ideals in violence and colonialism, and the machinations of Western expansion and capitalism. His analysis of global power shifts roots this conception of American ideology in the commercial aspect of colonialism. He maintains that Europe's Industrial Revolution and colonial expansion commercialised the roles of men and women, reducing human beings to their monetary value. This principle, Baldwin contends, infects the Declaration of Independence, 'a document more clearly commercial than moral. This is how, and why, the American Constitution was able to define the slave as three-fifths of a man' (679). This criticism of the American Constitution as mercenary is a view shared by contemporary writers such as Michelle Alexander. In *The New Jim Crow* (2012), Alexander invokes the spirit of Baldwin in a chapter entitled "The Fire This Time". Earlier in the text, she asserts that:

It may be impossible to overstate the significance of race in defining the basic structure of American society. The structure and content of the original Constitution was based largely on the effort to preserve a racial caste system — slavery (25).

Furthermore, Alexander argues convincingly that federalism 'was the device employed to protect the institution of slavery and the political power of slaveholding states' (26). In his criticism of European history and American legal-political structures, Baldwin demonstrates how such structures and a binary vision of the world can serve to create an immoral economy. As Alexander concludes: 'Upon this racist fiction rests the entire structure of American democracy' (26).³

Alexander's Baldwinian rhetoric emphasises a foundational weakness in the American ideological apparatus, which rests upon a 'racist fiction'. Baldwin's discussion also touches upon the fragile and fictive nature of American ideals when he signals the dominant narrative through which neo-colonialism enforces a racial hierarchy: 'cowboys and Indians'. Baldwin's employment of cartographic imagery underscores this elision of Native American history: 'Ancient maps of the world — when the world was flat — inform us, concerning that void where America was waiting to be discovered, HERE BE DRAGONS' (679). Baldwin exposes the arrogance of colonisers who dismiss the history of a continent and the archaic European belief system that held the world to be flat; more broadly, his essay implies the economic impulses inherent to New World cartographic enterprise. Through his use of the legend borne by ancient maps of the world, evoking the crossings that first brought Europeans to the Americas, Baldwin's dragons become a motif for the racial tyranny upon which American society is built: exploitation of Native Americans and enslaved Africans. He also harnesses the dragon emblem to direct another attack at America, stating that: 'Dragons may not have been here then, but they are certainly here now' (679). Baldwin offers a cognitive map of America which emphasises its dangers and echoes the earlier quote from his short story "This

Morning, This Evening, So Soon”, in which he characterises New York as ‘some enormous, cunning, and murderous beast, ready to devour’ (161). But Baldwin directs his attacks at the structures and symbols which govern American society, not Americans themselves: it was the dehumanizing principle which ‘*controlled the pens* of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence’ (emphasis added); it was the American Constitution that defined a slave as three-fifths of a man; it is the city that devours. This distinction suggests Baldwin’s hope for Americans and belief in human capacity to effect social change.

Baldwin’s depiction of his movements between Harlem and Greenwich Village in “Here Be Dragons” is suggestive of the cityscape’s effects on emotion and behaviour, implicating urban design in, for example, the experience of isolation, safety, restriction, and freedom. Debord explains this mechanism as ‘a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones’ (Knabb 50). Though struck by poverty, Baldwin was sheltered in the familiar streets of Harlem: ‘This was in the black world — my turf — which means I felt protected’ (680). Yet despite Baldwin’s territorial language, “Here Be Dragons” also documents his challenge to the racial segregation of urban spaces in New York, as when he frequents an Italian bar-restaurant in Greenwich Village:

Once I was in the San Remo... I was *in*, and anybody who messed with me was *out* [...] it seemed to me that I was no longer black for them and they had ceased to be white for me [...] They had fought me very hard to prevent this moment, but perhaps we were all much relieved to have got beyond the obscenity of color (687).

Baldwin enters the contested public space of the San Remo, and subverts a racial black/white binary with an inside/outside dialectic of division: he is "*in*", and once he is in, there is no longer "black" or "white". He describes a community in which he also feels protected, transgressing racialised spatial boundaries and rendering them as porous social constructs. Balshaw and Kennedy's hierarchical graph of urban space suggests that contests over power and identity are:

most obviously marked in the categories of spatial duality — of inside and outside, of self and other — which often work to naturalise the symbolic order of the city, reproducing social divisions and power relations (11).

Baldwin's disruption of social divisions at the San Remo produces a blended third space of interfection between such dualisms, where binary categorisation is itself revealed to be a flawed space.⁴

Baldwin demonstrates how the walker of the city can produce and change space by innovating gateways for alternative interpellation; in his writing, this passage is often achieved through the implementation of visual, sonic, and kinetic schemas. This sense of shifting boundaries is developed in "The Price of the Ticket", which documents a visual and aural awakening driven by Baldwin's friendship with the artist Beauford Delaney, who introduced Baldwin to the blues and jazz, and who drew him into a greater intimacy with Greenwich Village.

According to Leeming, it was through Delaney's tutelage that Baldwin came to appreciate the secular sounds of jazz and the blues, music associated 'with sin and degradation' in Baldwin's religious upbringing (33). Baldwin's introductory visit to Delaney's apartment is characterised as an initiation into a vibrant world of visual and aural stimulus. Facing Delaney for the first time, Baldwin notices his

‘extraordinary eyes’, and gains admittance to the apartment only once ‘he had completed his instant X-ray of my brain, lungs, liver, heart, bowels, and spinal column’ (x). Delaney is thus invested with the incisive power of the artist, one that enlarges the capabilities of sensory perception. Baldwin conceives of the event as crossing a threshold into a new world: there is some repetition of the moment Delaney opens the door and Baldwin steps through it: ‘I walked through that door into Beauford’s colors... I remember two windows... I walked into music’ (x). For Baldwin, Delaney holds a transformative and transportive power, projecting him into the realm of the postbody (crossing the threshold after Delaney’s survey of his vital organs) in a liminal space of shifting referential coordinates: in his presence, the fire escape is ‘transmuted into the most exclusive terrace in Manhattan or Bombay’ (x). Baldwin’s descriptions of Delaney’s apartment are marked by an emphasis upon the doors, windows, and exits; in other words, those portals through which interior and exterior space are managed.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard tells us that ‘the dialectics of outside and inside is supported by a reinforced geometrism, in which limits are barriers’ (215). The limits and barriers of Delaney’s apartment both protect Baldwin and architect a threshold, forging a portal to other worlds. Bachelard also attaches sacred properties to the threshold, complementing Baldwin’s investment of meaning in Delaney’s doorway: ‘a mere door,’ Bachelard states, ‘can give images of hesitation, temptation, desire, security, welcome and respect’ (224). Furthermore, Baldwin’s depiction of Delaney’s doorway invokes the traditional song, “Lord Open the Unusual Door”, which Delaney would often sing (Leeming 32). Lauri Ramey’s work on slave songs identifies the doorway as a ‘profoundly resonant objective

correlative' which creatively blends image and substance, in which she positions African American spirituals, 'neither in nor out of accepted spaces of identity, nationality, ownership, production, acceptance, art, poetry, value, originality, meaning, or interpretation' (116, 117). In his biography of Baldwin, Leeming — who experienced his own profound, transportive, postbody journey upon crossing the threshold of Delaney's doorway — characterises their friendship as 'the bond of the "unusual door"' (36), crystallising the relationship between artist and writer in this initiatory meeting, a moment invested with the sonority of spirituals, jazz, and the blues, and the liminality of Delaney's doorway, a portal to a shifting, alternative landscape.⁵

There is an emphasis on visuality in Baldwin's descriptions of Delaney and his apartment. As well as endowing Delaney himself with X-ray vision, Baldwin's recollection of walking through the door 'into Beauford's colors' intimates a new conception of seeing, a conception influenced by Delaney's palette. In the *Paris Review* interview, Baldwin recalls a day in the winter of 1940 (Leeming 34) in which he was:

standing on a street corner with the black painter Beauford Delaney down in the Village, waiting for the light to change, and he pointed down and said, "Look." I looked and all I saw was water. And he said, "Look again," which I did, and I saw oil on the water and the city reflected in the puddle. It was a great revelation to me. I can't explain it. He taught me how to see, and how to trust what I saw. Painters have often taught writers how to see. And once you've had that experience, you see differently.

Baldwin's remembrance is revealing because it suggests that Delaney not only gave Baldwin a new way of perceiving through light and sound, but that this heightened register altered the way Baldwin was able to see New York, through a revelatory

reflection of the city in oil and water — among the tools of the painter. Leeming characterises this as ‘a lesson in complex vision’ (34). But there is an emphasis, also, on sound. Baldwin begins:

to hear what I had never dared or been able to hear... in his studio and because of his presence, I really began to hear Ella Fitzgerald, Ma Rainey, Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Paul Robeson, Lena Horne, Fats Waller (x).

Baldwin experiences what Douglas Field refers to as an ‘aural epiphany’: Delaney ‘opened Baldwin’s eyes and ears to other worlds around him’ (4). Delaney’s mentorship serves as the chrysalis for Baldwin’s dynamic literary cartographies; his construction of black life in the city is invested with a synaesthetic blending of complex visuality and resonant auralities.

While the topography of Delaney’s apartment in Greenwich Village is represented as a sensorial enclave, Baldwin describes the Village itself as ‘an alabaster maze perched above a boiling sea... racially, the village was vicious’ (xi). Alabaster connotes whiteness and smoothness, but Baldwin’s notion of an alabaster *maze* suggests an alterity-inducing white landscape invested with angular contours. The rendering of a white landscape that positions the black figure as aberrational is seen in other works: the essay “Stranger in the Village” (1953) is ostensibly about Baldwin’s time living and writing in a Swiss mountain village, where his appearance is a “sight” for the native villagers, who, Baldwin conjectures, have never seen a black man before (42). In “The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American”, collected in *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), Baldwin writes that it is in this ‘absolutely alabaster landscape, armed with two Bessie Smith records and a

typewriter, I began to try to create the life that I had first known as a child'; he was writing his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (18). In "Stranger", we also see another instance of Baldwin's use of Chartres cathedral as a symbol of European cultural hegemony — the edifice says something to the European villagers that it does not communicate to him, but equally, 'this cathedral says something to me which it cannot say to them' (48). Baldwin reads the architecture of Chartres cathedral as a cultural text, stating:

Perhaps they are struck by the power of the spires, the glory of the windows; but they have known God, after all, longer than I have known him, and in a different way, and I am terrified by the slippery bottomless well to be found in the crypt... I doubt that the villagers think of the devil when they face a cathedral because they have never been identified with the devil (48).

Baldwin's reading highlights a history of European religious persecution and the binaries through which it operates: of God and the devil, good and evil, white and black. Additionally, he calls our attention to the hierarchical structure both inherent to binary categorisation and the architecture of the cathedral, identifying the villagers' experience of looking with the spire, and his own with the crypt, intimating the operation of multiple visual regimes. As the skyline of New York projects a dominant presence in the lives of its inhabitants and the texts of Baldwin, Chartres cathedral blots out the sky and casts its shadow over the occupants of the town.

Baldwin's barbed imagery portrays Delaney's Greenwich Village apartment as a refuge above a precariously positioned and dangerous city space, which he imbues with the violence and depth of the sea. The image calls to mind Bachelard's

description of the noise of the city as an ‘ocean roar’ (*Poetics* 28). The intricate geometry involved in Baldwin’s image conjures an angular frontier of sharp corners and shifting waves — he insists: ‘To lose oneself in the maze was to fall into the sea’, before listing the desperate fates awaiting those who lose themselves, who fall: ‘strung out or going under a subway train... going home and blowing their brains out or turning on the gas or leaping out of the window’ (xi). Here Baldwin continues his excavation of what it means to be an American by deploying the language of discovery that marks “Here Be Dragons”; to plunge into this unchartered urban territory is to encounter the “dragons” that beleaguer its citizens. The cityscape is etched into these lonely, ignoble, deaths. Baldwin’s verb-heavy sentences emphasise the destructive action the city demands of its citizens, as its victims commit to deaths directed by the levels, planes, and perspectives of the urban scene: going under, going home, turning on, and dropping out. This directionality renders the walkers of the Village’s viciously racialised streets as actors, or in Mark Turner’s phrase ‘causal objects’ in Baldwin’s ‘complex dynamic image schema’, endowing the city with an ‘animate agency’ (*Literary* 22). Baldwin’s black city dwellers are robbed of their bodily autonomy while the urban topography is invested with the animate agency of the white gaze.

Frantz Fanon writes about this objectification in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), where the white gaze operates on the schema of the black body in space and time: ‘In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one’s body is solely negating. It’s an image of the third person’ (91). This dispossession becomes more crucial when we consider Lefebvre’s contention that ‘the human body has a corporeal power to produce

space' (Balshaw and Kennedy 13). Fanon's schema is a 'construction of myself as a body in a spatial and temporal world'; he creates this schema through the movements of his body, but the schema also works on him in a dialectic that constitutes a third space between body and world (91). According to Fanon, a historicity shaped by the white gaze distorts this dialectic:

[b]eneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided by... the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories. As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema (91-92).

Themes of power and vision recur so prolifically in black literature because they operate 'in the intersubjectivity of looking relations, the sexualising and racialising of vision, the sighting of the body as spectacle, the production of surveillance, and the authorisation of images' (Balshaw and Kennedy 8). Fanon's ability to conceive of himself as a body moving in a spatial and temporal world is bounded by the white gaze as it fixes upon the epidermal signifier of black skin; this is a violent process that rends and restructures the body schema: 'My body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning' (93). Fanon famously impresses the power of stereotyping on his self-identity:

I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Ya bon Banania* (92).

But these stereotypes pose more than the threat of internalisation: as Baldwin portrays in *Another Country* and perhaps more overtly in *If Beale Street Could Talk*

(1974), in which Fonny is wrongly imprisoned for rape, such stereotypes and racial profiling have enormous consequences for the freedom of black men and women in the city. These stereotypes are enduring: in *Whistling Vivaldi* (2010), Claude Steele harnesses the experience of journalist Brent Staples to describe the repercussions of living with the 'identity contingency' of stereotype threat (5). Of his experience as a graduate student walking the streets of Chicago's Hyde Park neighbourhood, Staples relates a strategy he developed to 'deflect' the negative assumptions of white pedestrians (7):

I became an expert in the language of fear... I did violence to them just by being... I tried to be innocuous but didn't know how... Out of nervousness I began to whistle and discovered I was good at it... On the street at night I whistled popular tunes from the Beatles and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. The tension drained from people's bodies when they heard me. A few even smiled as they passed me in the dark (6).

Steele suggests that Staples' choice to whistle Vivaldi 'made the stereotype about violence-prone African American males less applicable to him' by exhibiting 'knowledge of white culture' which 'caused him to be seen differently, as an educated, refined person, not as a violence-prone African American youth' (7).

Steele's focus on identity contingencies and stereotype threat is part of what

Alexander identifies as the symbolic production of race; the racial caste system:

define[s] the meaning of race in its time. Slavery defined what it meant to be black (a slave), and Jim Crow defined what it meant to be black (a second-class citizen). Today mass incarceration defines the meaning of blackness in America: black people, especially black men, are criminals (197).

Both Steele and Alexander's contemporary analysis allows for an appreciation of the enduring power of such stereotypes. Fanon's image schema articulates the

experience of racism on the body; Baldwin's urban landscape is invested with the animate agency of the white gaze. Delaney's apartment offers an alternate landscape, its contours shaped by the palette of the African American artist and the sounds of black music, which Baldwin is able to hear with a heightened awareness after crossing the threshold, not simply occupying but *producing* a safe space for the reinscription of African American identity and interpellation. The vital importance of this space is borne out by the enduring danger faced by black citizens in America, and the stereotypes black men and women must negotiate. Just as Baldwin described the Harlem ghetto as "Occupied Territory", Alexander writes that the 'militarized nature of law enforcement in ghetto communities has inspired rap artists and black youth to refer to the police presence in black communities as "The Occupation"' (125). For Baldwin, to live in Harlem was to live among 'our roots, our friends, our deepest associations' but also 'at the mercy of the cops and landlords' (PT 418). The socio-spatial praxis of city space has the power to dictate and confine the movements of its black populations, which Baldwin dramatises and documents in his fiction and non-fiction works.

Another Country and the Walker of the City

The value of the liminal space represented by Delaney's Greenwich Village apartment can be better appreciated if we consider the fate of the only major black male character in Baldwin's third novel, *Another Country* (1962). Jazz drummer Rufus Scott is driven to suicide by an urban landscape invested with the animate agency of the white gaze, symbolised, for example, by the sinister police presence

and unwanted sexual advances Rufus must defend himself against as he moves through the city streets. In *Another Country*, the boundaries of city space are delineated as Rufus, Baldwin's black *flâneur*, traverses Manhattan from the book's first pages, 'starting at Times Square, going uptown, then down to Greenwich Village to visit Vivaldo, and finally up to Harlem' (Omry 28). Whilst Rufus' social and economic status abjure him from the role of *flâneur* in Baudelaire's sense, Douglas Tallack's experiential model of the *flâneur*, who 'knows the city through desultory wandering, and a trajectory which catches the transitoriness and ephemerality of the modern city' (30) can be applied to Rufus' erratic and directed movements between uptown and downtown New York. In a Lefebvrian reading, the spectacle and "phallic verticality" of the New York skyline oversees the production of space 'under the tyranny of three intersecting, aligned lines of power: masculinity, the bourgeois family and capitalism' which, 'in concert... produce the rhythms of New York, New York' (Pile 221). The following paragraphs will illustrate how Rufus' movements are orchestrated by the tyranny manifest in the New York skyline, arguing that, as the walker of the city, Rufus both produces and reproduces the rhythms of New York.

Another Country offers a multi-striated vision of New York City. Its occupants traverse the cold urban territory, struggle beneath the shadow of the New York skyline, rising like 'a jagged wall', and one by one become aware — if only fleetingly — of their hatred of 'the proud towers, the grasping antennae' (109). Baldwin depicts a grasping, panoptic, and controlling urban environment not unlike De Certeau's vision of the city. In his chapter on "Walking in the City", De Certeau

reflects on the experience of seeing Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World

Trade Centre:

To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rule of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic (92).

De Certeau 'builds his analysis out of a reading of the 'text' of the city, deploying an analogy between walking and narration'; his formulation also implies the 'intersecting erotics of knowledge, vision and street walking' (Pile 225). Throughout the chapter, Baldwin's narrative creates the sense of an aerial vantage point, like the privileged view described by De Certeau. Initial descriptions of the city encourage the reader to envision it as if it were spread out like a map before them, stressing the city's cartography: 'Newsstands, like small black blocks on a board, held down corners of the pavements' (10). The novel's opening line gives the reader Rufus' geographical bearings: 'He was facing Seventh Avenue, at Times Square' (9). New York is personified, the people at its mercy: Rufus lives under the 'murderous' weight of the dark city, beneath the soaring architecture 'unlit, blunt like the phallus or sharp like the spear' which guards it, though it never sleeps (10). This description suggests an ever-vigilant, masculine, and sinister omnipresence, like De Certeau's 'anonymous law' that dictates the movements of the walkers of the city, their bodies 'clasped by the streets'. In addition, there are two defining moments in the first chapter of Baldwin's text in which Rufus Scott is 'lifted out of the city's grasp'. The first precedes the sexual encounter between Rufus and Leona, a white woman newly arrived in the city from the South, after they have stepped

out onto a balcony together at a party held near Riverside Drive. The second occurs as Rufus climbs the George Washington Bridge, and is followed by his suicide.

These moments are cross-referenced in the narrative. Standing out on the balcony, Rufus hears the 'faint murmur' of the Hudson, and remembers his childhood home in east Harlem, near the Harlem River. He recalls how, as a boy, he 'waded into the water from the garbage-heavy bank or dived from occasional rotting promontories', and that, one summer, he watched a father carry the body of his drowned son from the river (20). As he approaches Leona, at the edge of the balcony, Baldwin notes that she 'was staring up the river, toward the George Washington Bridge' (21).

These indications of Rufus' past and his fate firmly tether his death to his relationship with Leona and the psychic fracturing of his urban identity.

The sexual relationship between Rufus and Leona is initiated on the balcony of a high-rise building, the shadows of which torment and imprison the occupants of the city, those 'ordinary practitioners' who 'live below the threshold at which visibility begins' (De Certeau 93). Lifted above this threshold by his elevated position far above street level, Rufus appears to enjoy a privileged and scopic understanding of the city in its spatial totality:

Looking straight down, he seemed to be standing on a cliff in the wilderness, seeing a kingdom and a river which he had not seen before. He could make it his, every inch of the territory which stretched beneath and around him now, and, unconsciously, he began whistling a tune and his foot moved to find the pedal of his drum (22).

There are three significant points presented in this brief extract. Firstly, Baldwin's conception of the city as a "wilderness" that Rufus can possess as his own dominion has colonial connotations, along with all that implies in terms of racial and sexual

violence. Secondly, Rufus' panoptic view of the panorama-city makes the city a spectacle. And thirdly, his impulse to whistle and drum references the beat or rhythm of the city, a trope established by Baldwin early on in the chapter. Upon analysis of these points it becomes clear that Baldwin's mappings of Harlem operate through a synaesthetic conception of urban subjectivity. Through his simultaneous inscription of how the subject is constructed through a visual or scopical relation to the city, and how the subject is constructed through an aural or sonic relation, Baldwin dismantles and debinarises prevailing hierarchical divisions of visual and sonic schemas.

New York Wilderness: Signal Inscriptions and Sites of Intensity

Wilderness metaphorizes the racial and sexual anxieties of city living in sixties America, and signals the dense, layered histories the urban inhabitant mediates by moving through the city. A blending of wild and urban space is traceable not only in this Baldwin moment, but in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, and in contemporaneous works such as Amiri Baraka's "Hymn for Lanie Poo". Engaging with these texts alongside analysis of Rufus' New York wilderness allows for a consideration of alternative ontological frameworks that provoke a re-reading of the positionality of the black walker of the city in these examples; tracking their post-spatial coordinates recalls the transformative reclamation of space signified by Beauford Delaney's Village apartment. Furthermore, a socio-spatial "wilderness" infiltrates the spaces of — and relationships between — bodies, evidenced in Rufus and Leona's sexual encounter. As Jarvis suggests: 'Corporeal cartographies — mappings

of the body — loom large on the horizon of the geographical imagination and ought to be seen as integral to postmodern spatial economy' (9). The body's relationship to the horizon of the geographical imagination and spatial economies will be developed over the following paragraphs, with a focus on how the body is positioned in relation to the city's monuments and signal inscriptions.

Rufus' elevation affords him a new conception of the city in which he lives; he sees 'a kingdom and a river which he had not seen before'. This panoramic view empowers him; he believes he can make every inch of the 'territory' his. However, as Baldwin would prophesise in *The Fire Next Time* (1963), '[t]ime catches up with kingdoms and crushes them' (72). The language Baldwin employs here — 'wilderness', 'kingdom', 'territory' — is the vocabulary of the Old Testament, but also of colonial expansion. This depiction is an example of 'a particular postwar (and specifically 1960s) rhetoric of the city as a wilderness or "urban jungle" in which chaos and racial violence prevails' (Reddinger 127). Amy Reddinger develops De Certeau's understanding of the practitioner of the city to stress the social and historical forces that work upon the city dweller. They are not, Reddinger emphasises, 'actualizing *blank* space, but rather interacting with a complex and layered spatial history through which their subjectivity is already (at least partially) created' (129). Thus, Reddinger offers a reading of an episode in which Richard reacts to an attack upon his son by young black boys with racist rhetoric, calling them both "goddamn Indians", and "(l)ittle black bastards" (206, 207). Reddinger points out how Richard 'figuratively replaces' — or perhaps conflates — the black children with Native Americans, 'recalling a history of racial anxiety that has its origins — in the specific context of the island of Manhattan — in the early

colonization of the nation' (127). Reddinger's analysis consistently foregrounds the city as 'a dense and complex space of layered racial histories' (127). These layered racial (and gendered) histories must be negotiated by the occupants of the city and can be traced in the spaces of New York, in the city's inscriptions and in the operations of an urban socio-spatial dialectic, as further developed below.

In his 1925 celebration of Harlem as African American culture capital, James Weldon Johnson acknowledges the layering of cultural histories when he notes that: 'In the history of New York, the significance of the name Harlem has changed from Dutch to Irish to Jewish to Negro' (301). Indeed, Harlem retains an inscription of its colonial origins in the adoption/adaptation of the Dutch name *Haarlem* that designates the space, whilst *Manhattan* is the surviving native name for the island. In *Sweet Home* (1993), Scruggs discusses New York's layered racial histories in his analysis of Baraka's "Hymn for Lanie Poo", published in the collection *Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note* (1961). His discussion focuses on the following lines:

Each Morning
I go down
to Gansevoort St.
and stand on the docks
and stare out
at the horizon
until it gets up
and comes to embrace
me. I make believe
it is my father.
This is known
As genealogy (9).

Scruggs argues that the Dutch street name *Gansevoort* 'acts to alienate the speaker by its evocation of a previous history' (18). The speaker's ancestral origins are not

signposted in the 'visible city' but in 'an invisible "it", a "horizon"' (19). For Scruggs, Baraka uses Gansevoort Street not only to evoke the way in which the speaker is excluded from the 'city's human history', but also, as the Gansevoort's were lawyers, the 'relationship of the law to the question of black identity in the mapped city' (18, 19). Baraka's recasting of the horizon (an imaginary line that recedes as you approach it) as the speaker's father poignantly suggests dislocation from an ancestral history and further underscores the alienating topography of New York. Baraka's poem enacts Reddinger's insistence that the inhabitants of the city do not actualise blank space. Here, the traumatic spatial history of the city is written on the streets, present on its docks, and traceable in its maps and laws. As Debord affirms, the 'city is the *focal point of history* because it embodies both a concentration of social power, which is what makes historical enterprises possible, and a consciousness of the past' (par. 176). Thus the speaker's subjectivity is constructed by these layered historical inscriptions and the genealogical impossibilities implied by the horizon as a surrogate other-parent.

However, West African ontologies allow us to consider instead the genealogical *possibilities* of Baraka's positioning of the speaker and the horizon: in Dogon and Akan systems of thought, for example, the ancestor is a "quasi-material" presence that lives beyond the river and can inhabit the body of the living descendant. They are unconstrained by 'the laws that govern human motion and physical interaction' (Wiredu, *Cultural* 125). Thus, the dexterity and quasi-material status of Baraka's horizon — able to embrace the speaker of the poem — enacts a genealogical connection with an ancestral *presence* and reconfigures the processes

of interpellation by placing the speaker in an alternate relation to the contours of the urban landscape.

West African ontological perspectives also enable an engagement with the ancestor in the following reading of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. In a scene that would have echoes in *Another Country*, John Grimes climbs a hill in the middle of Central Park on his fourteenth birthday, where he looks towards the skyline of New York and feels:

like a giant who might crumble this city with his anger; he felt like a tyrant who might crush this city beneath his heel; he felt like a long-awaited conqueror at whose feet flowers would be strewn, and before whom multitudes cried, Hosanna! He would be, of all, the mightiest, the most beloved, the Lord's anointed; and he would live in this shining city which his ancestors had seen with longing from far way (27).

John crumbles, crushes, and conquers the shining city; he is mighty, beloved, anointed. Despite his urge to destroy the city, he also wishes to live in it, a city his ancestors could only envision from a distance, and with longing. This conveys not only a desire to move freely through the city, but to possess it, and to be loved. Dogon and Akan systems of thought conceive of the ancestor as able to traverse into post-space or even embody the physical space of the descendent. According to Kwasi Wiredu's writings on the Akan:

the ancestors and their world are conceived very much in the model of the living and their world... But though the ancestors are conceptualized in terms of a this-worldly imagery... they are not vulnerable to the physical perils of this fleeting world (*Cultural* 125).

Baldwin's invocation of the ancestor suggests that it is they who have been waiting for, and who rejoice, John's triumphant reclamation of the city spaces that, as in

Baraka's poem, have excluded him from the city's human history, and this model draws Baraka's genealogical horizon into the streets of New York. The Akan also have a spatial, 'or even locative', conception of existence: '[t]o exist is to *wo ho*, that is, to be there at some place', therefore for time to exist it must also paradoxically 'be there at some place' (Wiredu, *Cultural* 121). This disavowal of the existence of time allows for the ancestor to co-exist with the descendant. However, Standley asserts that 'while New York is Baldwin's city, it is a New York viewed through the lens of a Harlem birth, rearing, and residency: "I came from a certain street in Harlem, a certain place and time."' (141). Baldwin's acknowledgement of the significance of his origins, in terms both of time and place, locates his identity in a spatially specific *and* historical moment.

Baldwin's work also articulates Reddinger's distinction between blank and layered space. Although Rufus, like John Grimes, anticipates a domination of the city, the city has already constructed Rufus' subjectivity. Similarly, the 'attempts at "love"' between Rufus and Leona 'become a nightmarish reenactment of the "racial nightmare" of U.S. History' (Reddinger 121). Field stresses Baldwin's preoccupation with 'the psychosexual landscape of America, where sexual desire and racism are inextricably intertwined' (7). Rufus' desire to dominate the city is intertwined with his desire for Leona, and is expressed in terms of sexual violence: he wants to put his mouth to Leona's throat 'leaving it black and blue' (22). The phrase recalls the jazz standard that features so prominently in the prologue to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), while for Anna Kérchy, black and interracial love 'is always blue: it is the longing for a heart you can neither live with nor without... sung both in jazz music and in the blues, vibrating' the text (43). Reddinger notes that when

Leona initially resists Rufus, he encourages her to fight him, asking "[i]s this the way they do down home?" (AC 23). Reddinger views this scene as inaugurating their relationship:

by signaling the complex sexual/racial history of black men and white women in the U.S. in which black men are made to be both "a walking phallic symbol" of sexual desire/lust and a menacing rapist (120).

Rufus' use of the expression 'down home' situates Leona not just in the context of the sexual and racial politics of black men and white women in the United States, but in terms of an oppositional construction of rural south and urban north. As they engage in intercourse, the imagery of Rufus as conqueror continues; his joining with Leona is analogous to the violence of colonisation. Leona carries him 'as the sea will carry a boat', they rock, sob, and curse on the journey, labouring 'to reach a harbor' (24). The perceived transgression of their coupling is heightened by Baldwin's reference to 'the white God' and a lynch mob 'arriving on wings' (24), as though their sexual relationship courts violence. Leona is described as a 'milk-white bitch', Rufus' penis is 'his weapon' (24). The climax of their tryst is portrayed with the racial violence that prevails on the streets below: Rufus is strangling, 'about to explode or die', curses tear through his body, he 'beat' her, until he feels 'the venom shoot out of him, enough for a hundred black-white babies' (24). The violence of their union is orchestrated by signals from the city: Rufus' desire to bruise Leona's throat is incited by the lights below them; in a prelude to his death, the sound of music from the other room and a whistle on the river signals the end of their sexual encounter. Their coupling reenacts the horrors of African American history: the passage over seas, the "civilising" project of Christian missionaries, and

racial persecution in the South are all referenced. Baldwin's rendering of the violence of racialised and gendered urban space make clear the necessity of a 'retreat from and defense against a colonizing presence that is metonymically figured as the city' (Jurca 7). Rufus tries to escape this colonising presence in the depths of the Hudson.

Jarvis suggests that a consideration of 'spatial representations must seek to address the caesura from which all cartographies are composed. Marginalised spaces are always implied and central to any map's significance' (8). Significant to this discussion of urban layerings, Rufus throws himself from the middle of the bridge (its highest point) and departs the subway at Midtown to reach it, affirming Rufus' centrality to the psychogeographical limits and textual terrain of Baldwin's novel. Although Rufus dies at the conclusion of the novel's first chapter, the rest of the book is ruptured by memorials to him, such as the recurrence of Bessie Smith lyrics interwoven through the narrative in "aural memorial" to Rufus.⁶ The cultural symbolism invoked by the scene of Rufus' suicide must also be noted; for example, the George Washington Bridge has housed the largest free-flying American flag, the "Fort Lee" flag, since 1947 (Rose). The monumentality of the George Washington Bridge can be better understood if we employ Pile's Lefebvrian interpretation of the function of monuments in the legibility of urban space: they are 'significant coordinates (sites of intensity, points of capture) in matrices of meaning and power' (214). Baldwin underscores the symbolic significance of the site in his connection of the bridge to American ideologies: it was 'the bridge built to honor the father of his country' (77). However, rather than making space legible and aiding navigation, monuments:

make visible and 'mirror' back to the 'walker in the street' their place in the world, geographically, historically and socially; they reproduce repressive spaces which, while ostensibly acting as celebrations of events and people, have both feet in terror and violence; and they repeat not just people's experiences of their bodies and their relations to others but also modalities of power (Pile 214).

It can be argued that the river and George Washington Bridge operate like Baraka's Gansevoort Street, at once evoking, and excluding Rufus from, the city's human history; the colonising presence claims his life. Baldwin's symbolic use of the George Washington Bridge as the location for Rufus's suicide has an extra-geographical dimension if we consider his criticism of the Constitution in the essay "Here Be Dragons".⁷ Washington's document, too, denies Rufus's humanity. Unlike De Certeau, Rufus cannot escape the city's grasp.

'All That Glows Sees': Visual Regimes and the Urban Spectacular

The George Washington Bridge is a crucial symbol of the visual regimes at work in Baldwin's textual cityscape. Balshaw and Kennedy claim that '[u]rbanism privileges, even as it distorts, vision and the visual' (7). They argue that the development of visual technologies throughout the twentieth century changed the way the urban landscape is represented, and affected a corresponding shift in the way that the city is *inhabited*, 'accentuating the growing abstractions of space in this century and inaugurating the 'society of the spectacle' in urban form' (7). Balshaw and Kennedy recall Debord's landmark work *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), in which Debord examines the impact of urbanism on contemporary life. He contends:

Urbanism — “city planning” — is capitalism’s method for taking over the natural and human environment. Following its logical development toward total domination, capitalism now can and must refashion the totality of space into *its own particular decor* (par. 169).

In Debord’s explication, there is a further blending of wild and the urban, as city planning “takes over” natural and human environments. Through their expansion at the turn of the century, cityscapes like New York ‘encoded new visual understandings of urban space as spectacle — the expanding production of monumental buildings visualised progress itself and popularised the visual delights of the panorama’ (Balshaw and Kennedy 7-8). It is important to stress at this juncture that to conceptualise urban space as spectacle does not *necessarily* render the city abstract. Reddinger is critical of De Certeau because his ‘scopic view’ emphasises the city’s ‘opacity and possibility... making unintelligible the material reality of life *on the streets*’ (128). As Debord insists, ‘[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images’ (par. 4), whilst Pile argues that ‘understanding social space in the abstract requires some grounding in the bodily experience of the everyday’ (173). Similarly, Jarvis calls for reclamation of the word ‘landscape’ to denote its original sense as human-worked, composed, and defined space, or a ‘composition of socially constructed spaces’ (44). Therefore, I aim to ground my cartographic reading of Baldwin’s work in how bodies experience, mediate, and articulate the specific social relations that prevail in particular city spaces and places (Massey, *Space 2*). Whilst *The Price of the Ticket* offers insight into Baldwin’s lived experiences, the fate of Rufus Scott reflects Baldwin’s deeply felt fears for black men living — and dying —

in the city. In December 1946, his friend Eugene Worth had 'left New York by jumping into the Hudson River' (Leeming 56). Baldwin invokes Worth in his 1984 interview with *The Paris Review*, commenting: 'If I stayed there, I would have gone under, like my friend on the George Washington Bridge'. More than a fictionalization of Worth, Rufus embodies 'the collective tragedy of racism' (Leeming 201). Unable to find or forge a safe space in the city, Rufus instead alights from the George Washington Bridge. His suicide marks a moment of exchange between the black water and the void marked on ancient maps and in Baldwin's New York cartographies by the warning "Here Be Dragons".

In Baldwin's connected scenes on the balcony and at the George Washington Bridge, Rufus' elevation affords him a scopic view of the panorama-city. In *Another Country* the American city is an instrument of white racial hegemonic power structures, something Baldwin also makes overt in *The Fire Next Time* (1963), where he writes to his teenaged nephew: 'This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish' (17-18). Baldwin's message intimates the crushing limits of the ghetto and suggests the subversive potential of the knowledge he shares with his nephew, James:

If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go. The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what white people say about you (19).

Jarvis elaborates on the subversive potential of this kind of knowledge when he writes that there 'can be no geographical knowledge without historical narrative. To know one's place and to change places it is necessary to listen to the meanings buried... across the storied earth' (191). The limits of the Harlem ghetto and the

historical narrative of American racism, segregation, and disenfranchisement are imbricated in Baldwin's letter. Furthermore, Baldwin touches on the power of representations in the construction of space when he references the details *and* symbols of his nephew's life.

In the first scene on the balcony, Rufus conflates his scopic vision with knowledge and empowerment, believing he can conquer the city. But as he moves among the dark empty streets towards his death in the second scene, the apartment buildings which surround him are 'lightless... [and] seemed to be watching him, seemed to be pressing down on him' (77). At street level, De Certeau tells us, the practitioners of the city 'walk; they are walkers, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban text they write without being able to read it' (93). Pile notes that De Certeau draws on 'Lacanian notions of language and the Real to suggest that walking invokes... Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic spatialities' (226)⁸:

The proper spaces created for the city by the view from above — whether embodied in the visual regimes of the panoptic gaze or cartography — are interrupted, resignified and torn by the everyday practices of moving by foot. Walkers are involved in the production of an unmappable space which cannot be seen from above (Pile 226).

The panoptic gaze is personified in the urban landscape in Baldwin's text, as the apartment buildings watch Rufus and inhibit his movements and actions, seeming to press down on him, implementing a visual regime. The idea of the watchful city is given its most sinister incarnation in the (white) police presence that patrols the outskirts of black life in the city. This is evident from the novel's first page; a look from a policeman inspires Rufus to abandon a plan to visit Vivaldo downtown, and

instead he heads north on Seventh Avenue. Later, hungry and vulnerable to the advances of men on 42nd Street, he is repelled from walking home to Harlem by his fear 'of the police he would encounter in his passage through the city', and his family's implied disapproval of his relationship with Leona (40). The topography of the policed city prevents Rufus from seeking solace and friendship, and instead propels him further into desperation.

The operation of a visual regime extends beyond Rufus' experience of the city. As Vivaldo walks Leona away from an increasingly abusive Rufus, their encounter with a policeman — who again merely looks at them — sends a chill through each of their bodies. Vivaldo feels 'the impersonality of the uniform, the emptiness of the streets' in an episode that renders the policeman as an agent of the controlling city (54). As he returns to Rufus, he feels threatened by the police presence 'prowling somewhere in the darkness near him'; this awareness makes 'the silence ominous... He felt totally estranged from the city in which he had been born' (55). The panoptic effect of Vivaldo's heightened sense of his own visibility is one of defamiliarisation; he questions whether he has a home in the city, to the extent that he 'began to wonder about his own shape' (56). Baldwin places the power of the policeman in his eyes: it is a look, rather than an utterance, that inspires feelings of fear and doubt in the residents of Baldwin's New York. He also consistently ties this presence to specific geographic locations, reinforcing the sense of city blocks and borders, and the surveillance of public space.

Rufus leaves the shadow of the apartment buildings and climbs the George Washington Bridge, affording him a view of the city. De Certeau describes the ability to view the expansive city below as 'totalizing the most immoderate of

human texts. [...] It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god' (92). However, despite his panoramic view, Rufus cannot read the urban text; he rejects the territorial impulse of his initial response, feeling that he 'could never go down into the city again' (78). Rather than looking down like a god, Rufus 'raises his eyes to heaven' to curse God, crying: "Ain't I your baby, too?" (78).

Furthermore, even from his elevated position, Rufus' view is obfuscated. Walking to the centre of the bridge, the city 'which had been so dark as he walked through it seemed to be on fire'; the lights of the cars on the highway (that nervous New York traffic) write their message 'with awful speed in a fine, unreadable script' (78).

Despite Baldwin's references here to light, Rufus' view of the city is not clear — in fact the (unnatural) light appears to obstruct his ability to know it. The city is an incomprehensible spectacle, glowing as though it were alight. Debord uses similar imagery when he states that the spectacle 'is the sun that never sets over the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire surface of the globe, endlessly basking in its own glory' (par. 13). Rufus finally enacts De Certeau's 'Icarian fall' (92).

The dynamic character of light in Baldwin's text challenges a binary vision of the gendered and racialised city streets by refusing to conceive of light solely as clarity. Yet in this scene the city is witness to Rufus' suicide, recalling Bachelard's dictum: '*Tout ce qui brille voit*' [all that glows sees] (*Poetics* 34), and reversing De Certeau's hierarchy. Baldwin's text certainly emphasises a scopophilic and voyeuristic relationship between the urban environment of New York and its inhabitants, particularly its black inhabitants. Reddinger argues that Baldwin hypothesises a reciprocal relationship between the city and its occupants, and

contends that 'the urban subject both constitutes and is constituted by the city' (128). Her argument is borne out by Baldwin's portrayal of the relationship between Leona and Rufus. Their relationship grows increasingly violent under the scrutiny of the watchful city. Reddinger notes how Baldwin's 'dissonant and shifting portrayal of urban spaces... makes visible the emotional and material effects of racial and sexual boundary-crossing' (128). As Rufus and Leona walk through the streets together, the world 'stared unsympathetically out at them from the eyes of the passing people' (29). Baldwin's diction here reminds us that a city is more than architecture, geography, or infrastructure, and is composed of a complex web of social interactions, compatible with Soja's sense of the socio-spatial dialectic. Reddinger's analysis of Baldwin's representation of urban subjectivity utilises a visual lexicon:

Baldwin *makes visible* the ways in which the relationship between the city and its inhabitants is reciprocal; the city articulates racial and sexual identities while the black, white, and queer bodies *seen*, for instance, on the A-train, along Seventh Avenue, and in the Village work to articulate the city itself (128, emphasis added).

Reddinger syntactically privileges visible, external, and bodily racial and sexual signifiers in her explication of how the city is articulated. Her description additionally stresses the kinesis of the city; its inhabitants are bodies journeying through and across blended spatial and temporal boundaries, enacting the visual rhythms of New York. Further to this articulation of racial and sexual identities through the city's visual rhythms, Keren Omry argues convincingly that the function of music in Baldwin's novel allows for the possibility of interracial community. Baldwin's narrative emulates the *density* of jazz; that is, 'the number and frequency

of reference points within musical structures' (Omry 29). Omry applies this high-density model to Baldwin's narrative, noting that 'there are as many as fifteen different shifts in narrative focalization' between Baldwin's characters, effecting 'rhythm changes' and transforming standard jazz elements 'into a new and racialized story' (30), extending the metaphor of the beat beyond the borders of Harlem.

The Beat: Baldwin's Jazz Drummer and the Syncopated City

Rufus' impulse to whistle and drum as he looks out over the 'wilderness' of the panorama-city connects the balcony scene to his father's lesson about the beat of life and death for all black people on the streets of Harlem:

hands, feet, tambourines... the man stiffening with a laugh and a growl and a purr and the woman moistening and softening with a whisper and a sigh and a cry. The beat — in Harlem in the summertime one could almost see it, shaking above the pavements and the roof (12).

Baldwin's synaesthetic conception of a sonic 'beat' that is almost perceptible to the eye and traceable in the kinesis of the human body works to complicate a visual/sonic binary, blurring the 'facile dichotomies made between' them (Jones 66). In her essay "Jazz Prosodies" (2002), Meta DuEwa Jones calls for a move towards an understanding of the oral and the textual as 'imbricated, not disparate, elements in African-American poetics', aiding an analysis of 'how the vocal and visual are performed across the geographic space of the page' (66). The visual rhythms of Harlem's beat — evident in the syncopation of musical instruments,

human hands and bodily responses (stiffening, moistening, linking the 'beat' to libidinal economies) underscore the materiality of language. The city is connected not just to this corporeal 'beat', but to bodily and vocal articulation: the laugh, growl, and purr; the whisper, sigh, and cry. Rufus imagines bruising Leona's throat — where whispers, sighs, and cries are generated.

This urban beat is emphasised as Rufus makes his train journey across the city towards the site of his suicide, and controls the spaces and rhythms of the body as well as the city. Rufus negotiates his way through the racially inflected frontiers of New York. These boundaries are mapped for the reader as Baldwin recounts the train stops on Rufus' journey — ominously, Rufus watches his stop at 34th Street pass. The rhythmic beat of the train syncopates time and space for the passengers in the train carriage. As the train pulls away from 59th Street, Baldwin comments that the black and white passengers are 'chained together' by history (77), an image redolent of slavery and exemplifying De Certeau's remark that the experience of travelling by train is 'at once incarceration and navigational' (113). Reddinger argues that it is 'the violence that Rufus feels as the train moves through the city that compels him to end his life' (123); I would supplement this argument by suggesting it is the violence that assaults Rufus' carceral body as he moves through the city that drives him to the desolate heights of the George Washington Bridge.

In her essay on posthuman gender in film, Judith Halberstam asserts that '[s]kin is at once the most fragile of boundaries and the most stable of signifiers' (57). Halberstam exposes how the fragility of this boundary renders the body in abject terms; the suicide scene dramatises Rufus' liminal and abject status. Up on the bridge, Rufus stands at the threshold of life and death, liminally located

between city and suburb — Baldwin references neon signs on the Jersey shore. Jarvis reminds us that '[a]bjection functions not simply at the corporeal and psychological level, but at the sociospatial, being extended to places and people' (191), allowing us to conceive of the bridge itself as a site of abjection. Rufus shakes like a 'rag doll' out on the bridge; indeed, throughout Baldwin's depiction of his decline, Rufus' body 'is paradoxically experienced as a foreign entity when it experiences the most private sensations as he smells, freezes, cries, hurts, and dies' (Kérchy 47). Rufus is constructed as both object (under the city's gaze)⁹ and abject through an identification with colour; after determining that he can never return to the city, Rufus drops his head 'as though someone had struck him and looked down at the water... He was black and the water was black' (78). Rufus is 'overdetermined' from without by the urban landscape (Fanon 95). Kérchy employs a Kristevan lens to emphasise how the text constructs Rufus' abject and wretched body:

ruined by impossible desires and tormented by corporeal needs and urges: Rufus sweats, faints of hunger, retches, cries of the need to urinate, and trembles from nausea at the fringe of prostitution, on the verge of a total mental and physical breakdown (46).

The corporeal needs and urges highlighted above intimate a Kristevan understanding of 'the danger to identity that comes from without', incorporating 'both the potentially threatening and the potentially liberating instabilities of identity' (Jarvis 191). Rufus' bodily responses are highlighted as his dangerous encounters on the streets of New York threaten the borders and boundaries of his identity. Weak from hunger, Rufus accepts the offer of a sandwich from a white

man he meets in the street, knowing that the man will expect sex in return. The scene is rendered with disgust as the sandwich meat is 'hacked off, [and] slammed on bread' (41). The food does not sustain him; the 'heavy bread' and 'tepid meat' induce nausea and he almost blacks out (42). The 'ice-white' man has 'hard eyes and a cruel nose and flabby, brutal lips', and Rufus is repulsed by his odour (42). As Rufus pleads with the man not to make him go through with their transaction, he tells him 'I don't want to die, mister. I don't want to kill you' (43). This battle for ownership of his body is encapsulated in his insistent rejoinder "I'm not the boy you want"; while Rufus' identity may be fractured, abject, and objectified, he rejects the role the ice white man tries to impose upon him (42). Rufus' status on the fringes of prostitution is a process of socio-spatial abjection; Pile suggests that streetwalking connotes both the *flâneur* and the prostitute, which are 'historically, socially and geographically embedded' on the streets (233). Additionally, Pile's 'three intersecting, aligned lines of power: masculinity, the bourgeois family and capitalism', are simultaneously transgressed and reinforced by the figure of the prostitute, existing in an abject space beyond accepted gendered, familial, and economic roles (221).

After this scene, Rufus returns to Vivaldo's apartment and breaks down as they listen to Bessie Smith records together. Baldwin's depiction of Rufus's sense of embodiment invokes De Certeau's doublet of incarceration and navigational experience:

Rufus was aware of every inch of Rufus. He was flesh: flesh, bone, muscle, fluid, orifices, hair, and skin. His body was controlled by laws he did not understand. Nor did he understand what force within this body had driven him into such a desolate place (50).

Rufus experiences his body as a foreign entity, in the third person. He simultaneously conveys an awareness of the material reality of his physical state (he was flesh), and alienation from 'this body', contained by and containing laws and forces he cannot comprehend. Rufus's conception of a driving force which infests and controls his body, and which propels him into 'a desolate place', suggests a disassociation between the self and the body. This is underscored by Baldwin's subsequent nod to the Bessie Smith track which continues to play in the room: 'And still the music continued, Bessie was saying that she wouldn't mind being in jail but she had to stay there so long' (51). Baldwin's musical reference directly connects Rufus' confinement within his body to incarceration: Rufus is imprisoned within an abject body, his movements and articulations scrutinized by the animate, tyrannical cityscape.

Kérchy also lingers on Baldwin's symbolic use of the George Washington Bridge as a stage for Rufus' suicide, the significance of which Baldwin makes overt in his connection of the bridge to American ideologies: it was 'the bridge built to honor the father of his country' (77). Kérchy offers a French feminist interpretation of Baldwin's text, developing Lacan with Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine* when she argues that 'the bridge marked by the Name of the Father is left behind for the feminine entity of the water... The deathly, mothering waves are black, hence the journey back to the mother is also a return to the other' (55). Like Baraka's genealogical horizon, here we see the depiction of the city as a surrogate other-parent for Rufus. Kérchy's interpretation can be used to argue that, rather than cursing God when Rufus cries in anguish "Ain't I your baby, too?", he is actually

addressing America through an urban landscape dominated by capitalist, patriarchal and racial power structures, echoing the saxophone's pleading refrain 'Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?' (13). As in Baraka's "Hymn for Lanie Poo", the city cannot be a father to Rufus, who (re)turns to the water as a surrogate other-parent, recalling Rufus' memory of a father carrying the body of his drowned son from the Harlem River.

Analysis of the three motifs of wilderness, spectacle, and beat lead us recurrently, perhaps inevitably, to the George Washington Bridge. Baldwin's text drives the reader, like Rufus, to the precipice in search of dragons, where New York's rivers and city spaces thrum with an ocean roar. What each of these motifs demonstrates is a growing sense of defamiliarisation, of socio-spatial abjection, once Rufus crosses the threshold to a new vision and understanding of the city in that watershed moment on the balcony with Leona. Rufus may alight from the Bridge early in the narrative, but the Harlem beat does not disappear from the novel upon his death; his presence is 'at the source of all the relationships in *Another Country*', and this presence haunts the remaining parts and chapters (Leeming 201). Ida, Vivaldo, Eric, and Cass each encounter the spectre of Rufus, largely through Bessie Smith's disembodied voice. Thus his absence resonates and has implications for others who share the space of the city: Rufus resounds.

Baldwin's Harlem: Other Avenues

This final section of the chapter will return to and reaffirm the proposition raised at the outset: that, despite his years in exile and uncompromising portrayal of the

place he described as a ghetto, James Baldwin offers sustained, intense, and faithful textual mappings of Harlem, delineating socio-spatial relationships at the intersections of gender, class, and race. Accordingly, the following pages will consider critical readings of Baldwin's Harlem, such as Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts' *Harlem is Nowhere* (2011). This is not an exhaustive review, but will aim to highlight some of the key questions and criticisms levelled at Baldwin's representation of the Harlem he was born and grew up in. To underscore that a commitment to Harlem spans Baldwin's career and forms a cornerstone of his literary canon, this section will also engage with Baldwin's non-fiction essays, "The Harlem Ghetto" (1948), and "Fifth Avenue, Uptown" (1960), his semi-autobiographical first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), and his last, *Just Above My Head* (1979). These texts are each rooted in Harlem and share the spatial preoccupations of *Another Country* and *The Price of the Ticket*. Indeed, the beat that pervades *Another Country* — a metaphor for life and death on the streets of Harlem — reappears in *Just Above My Head*.

The narrative of Baldwin's final novel follows the career of gospel singer Arthur Montana and is voiced by his older brother, Hall. After a tour that takes him to Canada, Arthur tries to explain his experiences there to his brother: 'it's another beat they got up yonder. And I can't really find the words for what I'm trying to say — it's like another — *pulse* — the beat inside the beat' (374). Arthur's explanation ties the beat to a geographical, cultural, and socially specific locus. The beat here is also expressed in terms of the syncopation of time: 'the cats behind me would be keeping *time* — but — they couldn't — *anticipate* — you know, when you *leap* from one place to another — they couldn't be with me, I was alone' (374). Baldwin's use of dashes introduces a vocal staccato to the narrative, as he replicates the leaps

Arthur describes. In this short section Baldwin references jazz and gospel greats such as Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Mahalia Jackson, Marian Anderson, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. Arthur relates:

"It's strange to feel," he said, "that you come out of something, and something you can't name, you don't know what it is — something that has never happened anywhere, ever, in the world, before... And sing a sorrow song so tough, baby, that it leaves sorrow where sorrow is, and gets you where you going." He subsided, looking toward my window. "And *that's* the beat." (375)

As well as articulating the beat as a social and spatially specific phenomenon, Baldwin acknowledges the processes of cultural translation and cultural hybridity, the locus through which, Homi Bhabha contends, "newness" enters the world (303): Arthur's 'something that has never happened anywhere, ever, in the world, before'. As with its incarnation in *Another Country*, the beat can achieve movement, enacting a journey that allows a community to anticipate transitions and leap together. This togetherness is reinforced a few lines later, when Arthur's reunion with Jimmy — who will become his lover — is marked by 'a beat', a moment of recognition between them. As in "The Price of the Ticket", music — though here the gospel that Arthur learns and performs in church — produces a transportive and transformative portal for black redefinition in the city, whilst the beat forges unifying, communal connections between Baldwin's African American characters.

Boyd celebrates Baldwin's depiction of Harlem in *Just Above My Head*, particularly his use of music. He connects the two when he states that '[h]ardly an aspect of Harlem is missed as he presents the vibrant, ever treacherous street life

with gospel music forming the sound track to each chapter' (141). In her book on Baldwin's later fiction, Lynn Orilla Scott suggests that Rufus and Ida are Arthur's predecessors, while he in turn is 'the last of several black musicians or singers in Baldwin's fictional corpus' (146). In Virginia, among the African American churchgoers, Arthur's performance at a Civil Rights fundraiser demonstrates how gospel music allows the visiting New York singer to commune with the black southern residents; as Hall describes: 'Without a sound, I heard the church sing with him, anticipating, one line, one beat, ahead of him' (407). Unlike Arthur's Canadian audience, black Virginia can anticipate and leap with Arthur, because in Baldwin's text they represent gospel's ancestral home. As well as the connection between them and an ancestral past, Arthur and his southern audience come from the same place: the church. Despite the evident dangers awaiting them on the journey South, and the mob of white aggressors outside, the church becomes a safe space in which Arthur and his audience can perform a communal ritual that strengthens their resolve and their unity. At the close of Arthur's song, there is no applause:

spectators applaud, but there are no spectators in the church: they let you know by the sound of their voices, with *Hallelujah!* and *Amen!* and *Bless the Lord!* and by the light on their faces (JAMH 409).

Hall feels joy and power after Arthur's performance; he is relieved to be 'where I belonged... It was as though something had been waiting here for me, something that I needed' (410). The communal feeling produced by Arthur's performance in the South is contrasted one hundred pages later by Arthur's performance with Sonny Carr at a Parisian jazz joint before a transnational audience. As Arthur

observes the reactions to Sonny's blues, he 'hears in their applause, a kind of silent wonder, inarticulate lamentations' (506). Baldwin associates this response with envy, with racism, and 'estrangement from our beginnings': 'the applause functions, then, in part, to pacify, narcotize, the resulting violent and inescapable discomfort' (507). After inviting Arthur to join him on stage, Sonny calls "*Well, let's have a little church in here!*" (511). However, the audience do not understand the ritual of antiphony, and they applaud when Arthur sings; the sound 'washes over him, like the sound of a crumbling wall. The crowd refused to let him go' (512).¹⁰ There is no feeling of joy and power afterwards; Arthur merely speculates about Sonny's perceived decline, detachment, and loneliness, severed from his roots and stranded in old age and Europe. The cultural and social context of gospel music has not translated to Sonny and Arthur's Parisian audience: the beat of black (African American, diasporic, migratory, ghettoised) experience is drowned out by pacifying, narcotising applause, in contrast to the success of this translation between Arthur and his southern audience in Richmond. The success of Arthur's performances in the southern states signal the mimetic function of migration narratives and the retention of southern rituals in the North.

Baldwin positions Harlem within the migration narrative in his essay "Fifth Avenue, Uptown", published in a 1960 edition of *Esquire* dedicated to the city of New York.¹¹ Baldwin's essay testifies how racial segregation and conflict continued to shape the urban landscape in the North as he maps the boundaries of Harlem. He illustrates the ensnaring power of the ghetto on the psyche its residents, 'struggling in the fishhooks, the barbed wire, of this avenue', as he outlines the pull and repulsion of urban terrain.¹² Thus, in Baldwin's article, the notion of an orderly,

linear avenue, which is 'elsewhere the renowned and elegant Fifth', bordered by Central Park and parallel to Madison Avenue, is disrupted by the 'wide, filthy, hostile Fifth' which Baldwin characterises as its deadly double, where the Avenue bisects the ghetto. In *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), Baldwin makes a similar distinction between Madison Avenue as it exists on either side of this 'zone', stating: 'Harlem's Madison Avenue in no way resembles the American one' (243). Baldwin's Harlem is bounded by the compass points of 135th Street, the Harlem River, 130th Street and Lenox Avenue to the north, east, south, and west respectively: 'We never lived beyond these boundaries'. He imagines his walk along 131st Street between Lenox and Fifth, telling us 'there is a soda-pop joint, then a shoeshine "parlour," then a grocery store, then a dry cleaners, then the houses', evoking a sense of community and familiarity not only with the geography of Harlem but with its citizens, from the people who watched him grow up to their children: 'a riot, a forest of children, who include my nieces and nephews'. However, when he reaches the Fifth, the tone changes to one of despair. Harlem's psychogeographic landscape is pockmarked by rents and tears in the community: 'All along the block, for anyone who knows it, are immense human gaps, like craters'. Baldwin suggests that these human gaps are so personal that they are only perceptible to those who 'know' the block. They are left not only by those who have moved away ('into some other ghetto') or have died (through war, police brutality, madness, drug overdose), but are also constituted by the people who are left 'fighting for their lives' in the ghetto, subject to a myriad of living deaths. The ghetto is depicted here as a cyclical vortex that is hard to survive, and from which it

is almost impossible to escape.¹³ Harlem is another country, severed from those other, *American* avenues.

For some critics, Baldwin's flight from Harlem detracts from his position as an "authority" on life in the ghetto. In *Harlem is Nowhere*, Rhodes-Pitts examines Baldwin's treatment of Harlem in the essays "The Harlem Ghetto", "Notes of a Native Son" (1955), and "Fifth Avenue, Uptown". From the first chapter of her book, Rhodes-Pitts establishes Harlem as a physical centre that draws and focuses a people, but Harlem becomes a site of departure in her analysis of Baldwin's work. She concludes that Baldwin 'leaves behind the boundaries of Harlem itself, and the specifics of its daily lived reality, in the process of describing it' (108), especially through a narrative technique she coins "the Jimmy" (107). Rhodes-Pitts employs cinematic terms to illustrate how Baldwin details a specific instance before 'zooming' out to incorporate the general, broader picture. To illustrate this technique, she offers the following quote from "The Harlem Ghetto":

All of Harlem is pervaded by a sense of congestion, rather like the insistent, maddening, claustrophobic pounding in the skull that comes from trying to breathe in a very small room with all the windows shut (*Notes* 57).

Rhodes-Pitts suggests that Baldwin's use of the phrase 'All of Harlem' reveals a spectative distance between Baldwin and his community:

All of Harlem. With those words, Baldwin positions himself as an expert/interpreter of the place in which in "Fifth Avenue, Uptown" he describes as turf. Having transcended these boundaries to reach the pages of *Commentary* magazine, Baldwin's phrase indicates not only the place he is speaking about, but to whom he speaks. That great leap... to voicing the generalized concerns of Negroes, is performed for the benefit of the mostly white audience (108).

The language here stresses upward mobility: Baldwin transcends, reaches, and leaps. His appearance in the pages of *Commentary* is followed by, and seemingly tantamount to, his departure from Harlem. Rhodes-Pitts is swift to note that by the end of the year in which “The Harlem Ghetto” was published, Baldwin was living in Paris: ‘the first of a series of departures, a deliberate attempt to escape that very small room of Harlem, and America, where he could no longer breathe’ (108). Yet despite the fact that Baldwin did not live permanently in Harlem after the early 1940s, his family’s continued presence there provided him with strong ties to the community, and he ‘conceived of himself “as a kind of trans-atlantic commuter”’ (Standley and Pratt 15).¹⁴ Rhodes-Pitts’ commentary on Baldwin’s ‘series of departures’ must allow also for his recurring return, indicating an affinity with those same streets he was attempting to escape. Her narrow focus on “the Jimmy” ignores the breadth and complexity of the Baldwin canon and undervalues the deeply personal nature of his work. Indeed, despite his reputation as an eloquent and powerful speaker and advocate for the Civil Rights Movement, Baldwin repeatedly rejected the title of spokesman or leader, remarking that: ‘A spokesman assumes he is speaking for others. I never assumed... that I could’ (Field 35-36).

For Rhodes-Pitts, Ralph Ellison’s rejection of ‘the position of tour guide or interpreter’ sets him apart from contemporaries Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin; she argues that the “*sacredness and inwardness*” of Ellison’s approach provides a counterpoint for ‘the dilemmas and orientation found’ in their work (115). Nevertheless, Rhodes-Pitts cites one particular element of Ellison’s work as potentially ‘destructive and reductive’ (118): when he ‘heard the street slang *Oh, man, I’m nowhere* and heard the identity crisis, negation, and psychic despair

provoked by daily life under white supremacy’ (117). She also highlights Baldwin’s translation of Harlem slang “Oh, I’m TV-ing it” used among young people without job prospects in “Fifth Avenue, Uptown”. Rhodes-Pitts characterises both writers as emerging ‘from their descent into Harlem with the trophy of a greeting from which to derive a metaphor about all black existence’ (118). Although her concerns about generalisations of Harlem residents are important ones, to portray Baldwin as *descending* into Harlem — where, after all, his friends and members of his family continued to live — and returning with trophies in the form of black urban language, packaged into reductive caricatures of black life and printed in magazines for white audiences that ‘were already used to being — variously — horrified, soothed, chastised, and exhorted by James Baldwin’ seems a distortion of his agenda (116). Although Boyd tells us that ‘one assesses Baldwin’s mood and attitude at great risk’ (2), his dedication to the Civil Rights Movement and vocal support for the Harlem Six, whose plight he detailed in his essay “A Report from Occupied Territory” (1966), are just some examples of his activism and speak to his commitment to the people of Harlem. Baldwin places himself at the heart of Harlem when he insists that:

My report is also based on what I myself know, for I was born in Harlem and raised there. Neither I, nor my family, can be said ever really to have left... our roots, our friends, our deepest associations are there, and “there” is only about fifteen blocks away.

Of his involvement in the cause of the Harlem Six, Boyd writes: ‘What is incontrovertible is Baldwin’s sense of justice... his commitment to those snared by the so-called criminal justice system that consistently coaxed from him an

unflinching righteous indignation' (100-1). Rhodes-Pitts' presentation of Ellison as a black writer concerned with black lives *in opposition* to Baldwin seems a disservice in light of Baldwin's Civil Rights activism.

Baldwin has been accused of a failure to celebrate Harlem's status as a mecca of African American culture in the manner of writers such as Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay. In "The Harlem Ghetto", Baldwin 'had slammed the home village as poverty-stricken, over-crowded, sinister, and infested with human and nonhuman vermin' (Boyd 39). Albert Murray argued in 1970 that Baldwin does not 'account for its universally celebrated commitment to elegance in motion, to colorful speech idioms, to high style... Life in Harlem is the very stuff of romance and fiction' (214-15). Baldwin's refusal to romanticise Harlem and his unflinching portrayal of the poverty, oppression, and violence faced by its residents has earned him both praise and criticism; he is charged by some with exploiting Harlem's deprivation (Boyd 42). Boyd's interview with Michael Thelwell, conducted in 2006, is insightful on this point. Thelwell comments that both Ellison and Murray 'took issue' with Baldwin's descriptions of Harlem (191). Speaking of the place of jazz 'at the center' of black culture, and Harlem's 'unique presence in the American landscape', Thelwell opines that Baldwin did not speak about Harlem through that lens: 'What many people fail to understand is that Jimmy was *in* but not *of* Harlem'; he points out that neither Ellison nor Murray grew up in Harlem, but arrived as adults 'attracted... because of Harlem's mythology', whilst for Baldwin, Harlem 'was a place where he lived' (191). This suggests a closer connection with the material reality of daily life for Harlemites. However, Thelwell elucidates a further dimension to Baldwin's relationship to Harlem, citing his novel *Go Tell It on the*

Mountain to evidence his argument: 'When you look at the geography of that novel, it is narrowly divided between the community of the saints and the sinners. Everything outside of the church is the world, the flesh, and the devil' (192). Thelwell's identification of this distinction between church and street is borne out within the first pages of Baldwin's novel.

The first part of the novel, "The Seventh Day", is set squarely in the streets on which Baldwin grew up. It is focalised by John Grimes and takes place on his fourteenth birthday. On the threshold of adulthood, John must make a choice between the temptation of worldly desires and the prospect of being 'saved' within the church. Baldwin writes:

Every Sunday morning, then, since John could remember, they had taken to the streets, the Grimes family on their way to church. Sinners along the avenue watched them... These men and women they passed on Sunday mornings had spent the night in bars, or in cat houses, or on the streets, or on rooftops, or under the stairs (4).

The sin of the men and women are written across the various city spaces, whether high upon the rooftops or low beneath the stairs. John's younger brother Roy exhibits his awareness of this dichotomy and the restrictions it places on his life when he exasperatedly asks his mother: 'I ain't looking to go to no *jail*. You think that's all that's in the world is jails and churches?' (18). Baldwin's depiction of the streets of Harlem are a reflection of his experiences growing up as part of a 'very closed community', according to Thelwell, where 'you are either a saint or you are out there in the world... the Harlem that Ellison and Murray celebrate would be of the streets — sinful, wicked, and debased' (192). For Baldwin, Harlem's streets 'represented the cops, the hustlers, the whores, and a host of other sexual

temptations that were to be reviled and avoided' (Boyd 192-193). Thelwell's understanding allows the reader to view the psychosexual landscape of Harlem as seen through Baldwin's alternative lens: *in*, but not *of* mythological Harlem. Yet Baldwin himself problematises any binary vision of church and street in his depiction of blended space in the novel. His treatment of domestic, street, psychic, and public spaces, such as the library and the movie theatre, show alternative worlds, and alternative possibilities, to the space of the storefront church.¹⁵

Baldwin's work consistently depicts and contextualises Harlem's place in the nexus of African American culture, emphasising its history and connection to Southern sites and the wider world. In "The Harlem Ghetto" and "Fifth Avenue, Uptown", he is staunch about the socio-spatial apparatus that separates Harlem from 'the promises of American life' (Hakutani and Butler 14), a position that would be echoed in his message to his teenaged nephew, James, in *The Fire Next Time*: 'This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish' (17-18).¹⁶ The intricate mappings of shifting, real, imagined, and interstitial Harlem spaces in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, like the recurring sonic beat that unifies African Americans in *Just Above My Head*, carve out and pathway spaces for black redefinition in and of the city, and these persistent intimate cartographies root Harlem at the heart of Baldwin's life and work.

Baldwin's New York is layered with racialised and gendered histories that are inscribed into its streets, signals, and monuments, and must be negotiated by its urban subjects. Thinking spatially about *Another Country* allows us to view Rufus Scott as the walker of the city, whose movements measure his physical and psychological unravelling, controlled by the pull and repulsion of the urban terrain.

The body of Rufus is degraded, defamiliarised, and destined to become the 'black corpse floating in the national psyche' (Leeming 201). His frenetic movements between uptown and downtown New York initiate this process of abjection, policed by a reifying white gaze and syncopated by a synaesthetic beat that propels his body and vibrates the cityscape. This metaphor of the beat exemplifies the sonic, visual, and kinetic modalities through which Baldwin renders the experience of the black walker of the city.

Baldwin signals the arrival of dragons in America in his excavation of New World cartographic enterprise. Dragons become the metaphor for all that is oppressive, corrupt, diminishing, and exploitative in American society; they imply the dehumanizing principle that controlled the pens of America's architects, and are written into the defining documents of the Republic. Although "Here Be Dragons" was not published until 1985, the evolution of the dragon motif can be traced across the Baldwin canon, from the short story "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon", in which New York becomes a murderous beast ready to devour passengers as they reach harbour, to Rufus's suicidal leap from the George Washington Bridge, this monument implicating the Founding Fathers in Rufus's destruction, addressed in his cry "Ain't I your baby, too?" (78). Equally, "The Price of the Ticket" demonstrates that dragons are inescapable in the city; to surrender to its rhythms is to become lost in a violent sea, crushed under the "murderous" weight of the New York skyline. Baldwin acknowledges the "animate agency" of the urban scene and pathways an alternative interpellation in the sonorous, vibrant space of Delaney's Village enclave (Turner, *Literary* 22). Here, Baldwin reveals that there *are* possibilities for black men and women in the city; these possibilities can

be found in African American culture and community, represented by Baldwin's excavation of the interior space of Delaney's Greenwich Village apartment. But Baldwin's mobile narrative locates community in blended public spaces like the San Remo, exposing and challenging the urban construct of racialised boundaries, allowing for the reclamation of contested city spaces. The socio-spatial dialectic operates on the inhabitants of Baldwin's New York, but they also have the power to operate on *it*, to reclaim space, to produce it. Baldwin's intimate cartographies signal the need for this, for all inhabitants of the city, their fates entwined like the passengers chained together on Rufus' train. Through his sustained and committed portrayals of New York, Baldwin bears witness and testifies to the material realities of the 'place where he lived', enabling a reading of the urban landscape, that most immoderate of human texts.

Ghosts in the Phonograph: Turntables, Time Machines, and the Postbody Poetic
in African American and Black Canadian Literature and Orature

Phonographic revolutions disrupt topographies of time and space; ghost-like voices rise from the grooves to offer sonic interference and intervention severed from a phenomenology of physical presence. This transcendence of spatial and temporal limitations is figured through diasporic works which engage with the symbolic use of the phonograph and other sonic schemas for the distortion of time and space. For example, Amiri Baraka suggests that there is a transportive power in the sorrow songs in his short story "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine" (1958), which uses the trope of kinetic vibration to travel the temporal fold. In chapter one we left the speaker of Baraka's poem "Hymn for Lanie Poo" (1961) at the docks, staring towards a genealogical horizon; here we revisit Baraka's work through Jean-François Lyotard's "Can Thought Go On Without a Body?" (1988), Aldon Lynn Nielsen's "The Largest Ocean in the World" (2004), and Gaston Bachelard's "Intuition of the Instant" (1932), each a comment on the blending of temporal states. In accordance with the disruption of temporality suggested by the title of his story, Baraka enacts Lyotard's future anterior from its opening line:

Here is Dothan, Alabama, U.S.A. 1898. This is of value. What is to be said about the place, Dothan, and the time, 1898. It is of value, but it doesn't matter what becomes of the telling, once it is told (1).

This sense of the future anterior becomes more apparent in the following paragraph, where Baraka writes in the second person: 'I know you Tom. You are my grandfather. I am not born yet but I have felt the ground vibrate too' (1), and

grows as Baraka describes childhood as the 'post-prebirth enlightenment' (3).

Baraka figures his elegy for his grandfather before his own birth: he retraces the journey of his ancestors, beginning with his grandfather in Dothan, Alabama, and cites racial persecution as the impetus for his grandfather's journey north, first to Pennsylvania and then New Jersey after his Dothan store is set on fire. While the story articulates Lyotard's future anterior in the temporal mobility of the speaker, it also addresses Lyotard's then unwritten question "Can Thought Go On Without a Body?" In his text, Lyotard writes 'it's impossible to think an end... since the end's a limit and to think it you have to be on both sides' (129). In Baraka's narrative the speaker simultaneously exists on both sides of his birth, complicating any singular definition of consciousness or of memory. He further troubles this notion by writing in the second person and addressing the grandfather who dies at the tale's conclusion. In the story's penultimate paragraph, Baraka asks:

do you realize that your unborn grandson has finally got here? Or is it that he's still unborn and only the body has managed to make it right now. Have you got time, Tom? (3).

Baraka's story enacts a postbody aesthetic, voiced by an unborn speaker who operates as a kind of spectral figure for the first section of the narrative before locating himself in a moment of presence at the feet of his dying grandfather.

Nielsen's exposition of Baraka's career charts his 'early and sustained efforts to renew experience in the crucible of art' (111). Nielsen presents Baraka's writing as a 'time machine by means of which, like the blues themselves, he memorializes and at the same time transforms sorrows into art' (111). Nielsen argues:

As Baraka travels along the fold in time, tracking past and promise, he arrives at the birth of black modernism. Whichever definitions of African American modernity we might deploy... the Great Migration of southern blacks to the urban, industrial North is a defining feature (*Integral* 111).

Indeed, Farah Jasmine Griffin depicts the migrant experience of time and space as part of a complex configuration of power in the urban North which confronts migrants as soon as they leave the South. This incarnation of sophisticated urban power 'controls the migrant body not only by inflicting violence upon it, but also by controlling its experience of time and space' (Griffin 102), reflecting the experiences of Baraka's Tom Russ. In addition to this arrival at the birth of black modernism, Baraka offers 'a historical space in which time folds over on itself', investing the story with a 'crossroads logic of temporality' (*Integral* 139). Baraka gifts us with a dynamic conception of time which this chapter locates in works by diasporic writers that trace the vibrations and dislocations of sound waves, primarily through the symbolic use of the phonograph. Nielsen's lens of the Great Migration in his reading of Baraka's story will be expanded and enlarged to focus on migrations and echoes across the diaspora, incorporating representations of New York in the work of James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison, and the imagined space of the southern city in Toni Cade Bambara's *The Salt Eaters* (1980), before tracing the vibrations further north into Canada.

In *After Canaan* (2010), British Columbian writer Wayde Compton argues that the experience of diaspora in Canada has 'long been defined by and against a bigger, continental historical saga', and cites African American spirituals as an example, in which 'the psalmic land of longing and the home of the captured Israelites was Canaan — the north, the land of salvation' (15). The title of

Compton's text itself references 'one of the grand allegories of the diaspora: the flight north' in which 'Canada encoded' became 'the land of salvation' (15).¹ Despite Compton's contention that 'for the blacks who fled to Canada, the spectacular allegory hardened into a cold prosody upon arrival', and the fact that Canada itself had been a slaveholding nation, 'this has been one of the symbolic legacies of black Canada — to be the appendix of the epic and the echo of the odyssey' (15-16). Through his mapping of Black British Columbian history and culture, Compton 'shifts the signifiers and inheritances of the Black Atlantic into Pacific space', underscoring the displacements and translations of 'what happens when diasporic cultures are moved into unexpected territories' (Smyth 391, 389). Compton's work consistently excavates the 'black exodus to the "Canaan" of Vancouver and its inauguration of the region's black community' (Smyth 391). He thus 'archiv[es] and generat[es] what can productively be called a Black Pacific node of the black diaspora' (390). Compton's work is shaped by a:

cultural need to... fill in a diasporic gap — to "extend" a "sounding line... backwards into history," as he says in *Bluesprint* — and measure the translations of African, Caribbean, and African American diasporic cultures as they migrate, drift, and echo across the sound waves on a journey to Vancouver, Canada (Smyth 390).

A sounding line of interconnection between Baraka's "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine", Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962), Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), and Bambara's *The Salt Eaters* will be traced into the second half of this chapter, in which an engagement with the writings of musicologist R. Murray Schafer along with Compton's turntable poetry extends and contemporialises the symbol of the phonograph. The versatile ambulation of the ghost in the track of the sound

recording articulates a postbody poetic that challenges geographical and historical paradigms that work to enclose and encode Black Canada.

Vehicles and Vibrations: Ghosting Baraka's Time Machine and Baldwin's A-train

There is a ghostliness shared by the texts under study which I have designated a postbody poetic, in which the voice can persist through time outside the body.

These disembodied — or even resurrected — voices subvert spatial and temporal boundaries in an act of haunting. Bachelard's writings on time suggest this postbody haunting and aid an understanding of the temporal logic wielded by Baraka, especially in his positioning of grief as the catalyst for the capacity of time travel; in "Intuition of the Instant", Bachelard writes:

The recollection of many instants is required in order to make a complete memory. In the same way, the cruellest of bereavements is consciousness of a future that has been betrayed: when that heart-rending instant comes as the eyes of a beloved being closed, we feel at once the hostile newness with which the next instant 'assails' our heart (65).

Bachelard's arrangement of time allows us to view the principal events of Baraka's short story as instants of (ancestral) memory, and to appreciate the 'hostile newness' of the moment of Tom's death in the final lines of the story: 'Tom, are you listening? Don't stare like that. Tom. Tom. O my god' (4). Additionally, these instants are mapped for the reader as we are given both their spatial and temporal coordinates: five of the story's nine paragraphs open with a particular date and location — the last is: 'Here is Greystone Sanatorium, 1943' (3). Indeed, in *Genesis* (1982), Michel Serres proposes that topography is 'the best way to understand

time', 'a mapping instead of a linearity' (Assad 41), while Bachelard argues that time is essentially discontinuous (66). Characterising the measurement of time by duration as artificial, Bachelard calls upon the shape of memory to evidence his point: 'Memory, that guardian of all time, keeps only the instant; it preserves nothing... of that complicated, artificial sensation of ours that is duration' (78). This concept eschews the dehumanisation or mechanisation of time in favour of an emphasis on human experience and perception of time; for Bachelard, duration is 'scattered in a cloud of instants or better, it is a group of points which are drawn more or less closely together by a *phenomenon* of perspective' (77). This phenomenon is implicitly shared by Baraka in his empowerment of sorrow, a human emotion, as the vehicle through which the narrator traverses the temporal fold. Furthermore, the perspective of the narrator complicates a linear notion of time in its second-person address to the grandfather who dies at the story's conclusion, and in the seamless entry of his grandfather's voice in the narrative. The narrator's relation of the events of his grandfather's life are 'scattered in a cloud of instants' as we follow his journey from Alabama to New Jersey; in the story, it is 'the perspective of instants which alone represents past and future' (Bachelard 88). Bachelard also argues that the way 'memories are localised in time... [exposes] how artificial is the order they find in our own inward history', and emphasises our need 'to learn and relearn our own chronology' (78). The artificiality of this chronology is elucidated by the malleability of time in Baraka's story, while its importance is underscored in the temporal pilgrimage the narrator must make to learn his own inward (and genealogical) history.

The narrator's sorrow acts as a catalyst for memory, and though he imposes a chronological narrative order, he defies linearity by anticipating his own birth, and, crucially, in his communication with his grandfather through "vibrations" felt in the shifting temporal territories traced throughout the narrative. Baraka's vibrations are an inheritance imbricated with a music² that travels through the bodies of the narrator's forebears:

Send my grandson's mother to college. She's got to know 'bout them vibrations. Got to tell him when he gets here, write it down. We're going north, Anna. Got to hunt them vibrations down. Got to find out where the music goes when we don't hear it no more (2).

These synaesthetic vibrations have a spatial and temporal locus, they are 'Dothan vibrations' that 'can carry a man a long way', and can be both sonically and lexically inscribed: Tom's daughter is charged with communicating the vibrations to her son so that he may 'write it down' (2). Nielsen argues that Baraka's writing is 'a complex vehicle for the transmission forward and backward of vibrations between the Alabama of 1898 and the postwar present of an America that remained wracked with racial torment' (*Integral* 138). Such transmission of vibrations is possible because time is not linear, but folded in Baraka's narrative logic. The story thus tracks the Great Migration through sonic and kinetic modalities, as these musical vibrations call Tom northwards. Baraka's notion of vibrations is akin to Bachelard's revelation of the sonority of time: for Bachelard, the 'world turns in conformity with a musical beat imposed by the cadence of instants' (85). He also frames the ordering of memories in sonic terms in a way that complements Baraka's search for vibrations; Bachelard writes that:

when we listen to the symphony of instants, we are aware of dying phrases, phrases that fall away and are borne off towards the past. Yet because of the fact that it is secondary, this flight towards the past is entirely relative. A rhythm only fades away in relation to another section of the symphony which goes on (88).

Thus, in Baraka's story, the vibrating landscape of Dothan fades as the family relocates to Beaver Falls, where there are no vibrations until their departure. When they leave, they carry with them two horns and a battered drum, and the town's farewells are rendered with sounds suggestive of syncopation: 'Tah, tah, tat, tah, yippee, hoorah, Tom Russ' (2). The topography of Pennsylvania cedes to New Jersey, where the speaker (here Tom) '[c]an't hardly walk for all the movement between me and the ground' (2). The sonority of the Russ family's journey and their search for the vibrations that call and recall them invests sound with a temporal and even prophesying power, as Bachelard tells us:

a musical ear can hear where a melody is going and knows how the new phrase will end. We anticipate the future of a sound, hearing it in advance, just as we do the future of a trajectory, which can be seen in advance (89).

Thus in 1925, Tom Russ is 'standing there trying to remember some of his unborn grandson's poems. Hearing a few words and shaking his head up and down', poems that are associated with and an extension of vibration (2). Furthermore, in Bachelard's assertion that Being is 'a place where rhythms of instants re-echo and as such, it could be said to have a past just as an echo has a voice' (89) we can view the narrative voice as Being, delineating the rhythms of instants that echo and re-echo along the sonorous folds of time vibrating Baraka's text.

In “Hymn for Lanie Poo”, as discussed in chapter one, Baraka’s horizon-as-ancestor defies the constraints that govern human physical interaction by embracing the speaker of the poem, whilst in “Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine” Baraka explodes any linear notion of time through his evocation of historical memory in the instant of his grandfather’s death. In the Dogon and Akan ontologies of West Africa, the ancestor is a “quasi-material” presence that can inhabit the same spatial and temporal coordinates as the descendant, and can cross great distances through space and time (Wiredu, *Cultural* 125). The power of the defiance of Baraka’s horizon lies in its genealogical reconnection with an ancestral presence despite the dislocation and dismemberment signified by the Middle Passage, and its positioning of the speaker in an alternate relation to the contours of the urban landscape, subverting the processes of interpellation dictated by the layered racial and sexual histories of the city. In “Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine”, however, it is not the ancestor but the descendant that traverses time and space, executing Lyotard’s future anterior, and ‘indicating the presence of the unrepresentable’ (Nielsen, *Black Chant* 235). Baraka’s story thus suggests the postbody coordinates of the ancestor, but invests the descendant with this same transformative and transportive power. His work stresses the communicative power of vibrations that are the musical inheritance of the speaker and the signal for his ancestors to move north.

Baraka’s metaphor of vibrations that commune with and compel the Russ family is not unlike Baldwin’s deployment of the beat that maps the spaces and rhythms of body and city in his novel *Another Country*. The temporal dimensions of the beat were posited in the first chapter of this study, and these ideas will be

developed further here, beginning with a closer analysis of Rufus Scott's train journey to the George Washington Bridge. In the novel, a temporal and sonic beat operates as a metaphor for life and death for black people on the streets of Harlem, and its infiltration of urban bodies and city spaces are emphasised as Rufus makes his train journey across the city towards the site of his suicide in the novel's first chapter. Amy Reddinger understands Rufus and his sister Ida's journeys on the A-train as:

an inversion of the eponymous jazz lyrics... For both Scott siblings, riding the A-train was calculated to improve their luck beyond their racially proscribed place in Harlem; it became the move into the racially and sexually diverse Village (124).

The layered racial and sexual histories Reddinger roots in Greenwich Village are also at work in the train carriages in Baldwin's rendering of Rufus' final journey.

Moreover, as Rufus rides the A-train, the Harlem beat is inscribed upon the tracks that demarcate the borders and boundaries of uptown and downtown New York.

Michel de Certeau's writings on rail travel are pertinent here. Describing the noise of the train, De Certeau's language echoes Baldwin's description of the Harlem

beat:

Only the partition makes noise. As it moves forward and creates two inverted silences, it taps out a rhythm, it whistles or moans. There is a beating of the rails, a vibrato of the windowpanes — a sort of rubbing together of spaces at the vanishing points of their frontier. These junctions have no place. They indicate themselves by passing cries and momentary noises. These frontiers are illegible; they can only be heard as a single stream of sounds, so continuous is the tearing off that annihilates the points through which it passes (112-113).

De Certeau's depiction highlights the sound created by vibrations against the limits and borders of the train, 'a rubbing together of spaces'. A transgression of these defined spaces is suggested by the tension at 'the vanishing points of their frontier'. De Certeau's language also has echoes in the sex scene between Rufus and Leona, a white woman newly arrived from the South, discussed in detail in chapter one of this study. The sex scene is described as a journey, suggesting a connection between the Harlem beat, riding the A-train, and this inauguration of Rufus' annihilation. The use of the word 'frontier' in Steven Rendell's translation highlights the sense of traversing the contested borders of the geographical terrain. A distinction between the *space* of the train, its components and compartments, and *place* is also traceable, as De Certeau tells us that the junctions 'have no place', the frontiers are 'illegible', and the points through which the train passes are annihilated. In her introduction to *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), feminist geographer Doreen Massey advocates conceptualising space 'integrally with time... not as some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations' which are 'never still' but 'inherently dynamic' (2); accordingly, Baldwin inscribes the train carriages as social space, blending the geographical and the historical. The city is mapped out for the reader as Baldwin recounts the train stops (Rufus watches his stop at 34th Street pass), and comments on the racial demographic of commuters as they embark and alight. As the train pulls away from 59th Street, the train comprises '[m]any white people and many black people, chained together in time and in space, and by history'; the noise of the train is described as a protest against 'the proximity of white buttock to black knee' (77). The sound of the train (the beat) measures out the length (rhythm) of the journey

— with all its stops — through the city; it syncopates time and space for the passengers in the train carriage. De Certeau suggests that the ‘iron rail whose straight line cuts through space... inscribes, indefinitely, the injunction to pass on... go, leave, *this is not your country*’ (112, emphasis added), which would support Reddinger’s argument that it is ‘the violence that Rufus feels as the train moves through the city that compels him to end his life’ (123). Embodiment is also emphasised in Baldwin’s text through the focus on the anatomical closeness between passengers, and on the epidermal signifier of skin colour. Baldwin’s stress of the race of the passengers, coupled with the impression that they are ‘chained together’, makes a strong link with slavery, and dramatises De Certeau’s remark that the journey is a ‘strange moment in which a society fabricates spectators and transgressors of spaces, with saints and blessed souls placed in the halos-holes (*aureoles-alveoles*) of its railway cars’ (113), alluding to the potential for societal and spatial transgression within the train compartment, but also to the fabricated nature of these spectative/transgressive states.

Such transgressions are not limited to the railway car in Baldwin’s novel, but extended to the city streets through a process of spatial abjection; Baldwin creates a defamiliarisation of city space as Eric returns to New York from Paris:

It might, almost, for strange barbarity of manner and custom, for the sense of danger and horror barely sleeping beneath the rough, gregarious surface, have been some impenetrably exotic city of the East (195).

Baldwin blends east and west here and renders the city like an abject body, with ‘danger’ and ‘horror’ beneath its veneer. Eric moves through these ‘impenetrably exotic’ streets to meet Cass, with whom he agrees upon the ugliness of the city.

Bessie Smith lyrics weave throughout the narrative as Eric and Cass discuss Eric's return to New York and Rufus' decline and eventual demise. The final lyric in this scene, from Smith's "In the House Blues", is given as the room grows darker:

The blues has got me on the go. They runs around my house, in and out of my front door. Then the needle scratched aimlessly for a second, and the record player clicked itself off (202-203).

According to Kevin Ohi, Smith's voice signals a sense of alienation; Rufus listens to her records before he commits suicide, and her voice reverberates throughout the body of the novel. Ohi notes how the 'intrusion of Bessie Smith's voice' ruptures 'the texture of the novel in unmarked commemorations' of Rufus' death (275, 278). The loss of Rufus inspires a 'disorienting "internal" alienation' within the other characters, who must relive Rufus' demise (275). This disorientation is suggested by the personification of the record player, the needle scratching 'aimlessly' before it automatically switches itself off. The lyrics themselves convey a sense of frenetic movement, as the blues run around the house, crossing domestic thresholds and boundaries. Baldwin characterises the beat as having the power of movement, associating it with hands, feet, and tambourines, 'shaking above the pavements and the roof'; here this association is extended to the blues (12). Baldwin's characters are haunted by the sonic spectre of Rufus; their aural commemorations ensure his presence throughout the novel. As Baraka's narrator is able to follow the vibrations into the ancestral past, Harlem's beat, associated most closely with Rufus, continues to be sounded in the afterlife of the book's following parts and chapters. Rufus is echoed and re-echoed both through the intrusion of jazz in the text and in the sexual encounters between the novel's other characters: Eric, Rufus' former

lover, sleeps with Cass and with Vivaldo, who engages in a sexual relationship with Rufus' sister, Ida. Ohi navigates the relationship between loss and desire in Baldwin's novel, arguing that '[s]yntactically, nearly all sexual episodes in *Another Country* enact Rufus' suicide: the vocabulary of their eroticism is usually one of falling, drowning, or both' (275). During Eric and Vivaldo's sexual encounter, for example, Vivaldo feels 'as though the weary sea had failed, had wrapped him about, and he were plunging down... plunging down as he desperately thrust and struggled upwards' (325). The scene also includes a repetition of Rufus' name in italics. For Ohi, '[s]uch encrypted choreographies seem to form almost the entirety of Baldwin's virtuosic sexual lexicon'; Baldwin's text, Ohi concludes, both elegises and encrypts Rufus (276).

Baldwin describes a defamiliarisation of New York's city streets in terms of time as well as space. His articulation that '[s]o superbly was [New York] in the present that it seemed to have nothing to do with the passage of time' (195) is not unlike Ornette Coleman's pronouncement: "New York Is Now!" (1968), whilst for Lorenzo Thomas, New York exists within 'a metapresent' (118). Mark Turner contends that:

The projection of spatial structure onto the conception of time has always been profound; in our own century, the scientific role of this projection has grown considerably larger, resulting in a blend that seemed at first an impossible clash — space time (*Literary* 95-96).

This blending of space and time can be traced in Baldwin's language as the Harlem beat surrenders to a note of despair, 'constantly struck' (as a clock strikes the hour), which 'stalked all the New York avenues, roamed all the New York streets' (196).

Additionally, Baldwin's description of the young black male walkers of the city, who walk in 'a kind of anti-erotic, knee-action lope... a parody of locomotion and of manhood' (196) imbricates the rhythms of their movements with the vibrations of the train: both are journeys through city space and time. Although Baldwin describes this motion as anti-erotic, locomotion and masculinity are similarly connected during Rufus' journey as he describes the train in sexual language, rushing 'into the blackness with a phallic abandon, into the blackness which opened to receive it, opened, opened, [and] the whole world shook with their coupling' (77). Baldwin's emphasis on 'the roar and the movement' of the train in this sexualised moment, as it 'groaned, lurched, the wheels seem[ing] to scrape the track, making a tearing sound' suggests the ability of sound to challenge the limits of space and time (77). Similarly, Serres notes that the purpose of machinery (architecture, for example) is to 'make the confused noise gel and the fury crystallize, but the *noise*... is more powerful than its mechanical force... this tissue... is ripping apart indefinitely, it is a tatter' (127). When Serres writes of "noise" in French, he invokes an archaic lexicon that, unlike the equation of noise with sound in English,³ more specifically stresses cacophony or a din of confusion, in which, for example, the world might seem to shake. Serres also uses the notion of time as tattered fabric to stress the *multiplicity* of time, which can be understood in numerous physical and metaphysical states: 'Time is a tatter and it is sporadic. It solidifies like a crystal or vanishes like a vapor. It is... a bundle of dispersed fluctuations... it goes in bursts' (116). Jennifer Pacenza uses the work of Serres in her essay comparing death and orgasm in the works of Shakespeare and Donne, a reminder that Baldwin's entwining of the two in his psychosexual commemorations

of Rufus (and the similarity of Baldwin's sexual register as Rufus travels towards his death and in his sexual encounter with Leona) taps into a long-standing literary convention. Pacenza argues that Serres 'denies the linearity of time. It can be a "tatter," "sporadic," crystalline, vaporous, multiple, unified, fluctuating, or stable... Like orgasm, time "goes in bursts"' (66). These descriptions embody time with the processes of the human body, and with bodily boundaries, where divisions of outside and inside are blurred: breath enters and leaves the body, for example, it becomes part of the body, and breathing is the rhythm by which the body functions, as the heart syncopates its spaces and rhythms. Like breath, time is 'a percolation', one 'where the past mingles with the future' (Pacenza 66). An engagement with Serres' concepts of time and of noise allow for a mapping of the sonorous body as it traverses the dimensions of space and time in Baldwin's novel.

The bodily and sonic conceptions of time at work in Baldwin's text are best exemplified by the personification of the record player cited above, in which the record player becomes a kind of postbody for the voice of Bessie Smith as it eulogises and encrypts Rufus. In "I Ain't Got No Body" (2007), Neil Badmington argues that along with N. Katherine Hayles, whose work will be a focus for the second half of this chapter, Lyotard develops a 'form of posthumanism that refuses to forget' the body (34). As Lyotard's text 'foregrounds materiality and embodiment', and 'the centrality of the body to thought', Hayles insists that the "*systematic devaluation of materiality and embodiment*" that informs some versions of the posthuman must... be countered with a recognition of how existence is embodied' (Badmington 33). Writing of computers as representing machines, Lyotard insists that humans 'need machines that suffer from the burden of their memory' (138), like the sorrow

of Baraka's story, in which the capacity to fold space and time is invested with the power of human emotion and ancestral memory. In the texts under study, Baraka and Baldwin both stress the sonority of time through a kinetic modality of vibration. While Baraka's characters trace musical vibrations in their migration to the Northern city, Baldwin's protagonist traverses the psychogeographic frontiers of the cityscape through the rhythms and vibrations of Harlem's beat and the A-train. The following discussion will analyse how vibrations of light and sound in the novels of Ellison and Bambara assist in the search for an embryonic language and alternative interpellation. In each of these works there is also an emphasis upon the role of the body (and postbody) in the production of sound — by materialising language, via poetic, technical emphasis on its sounds and rhythms, these texts announce the articulation of particular bodies in particular spaces and places.

'Time-Bending, Jazz-Shaped': Sonic Breaks in *Invisible Man* and *The Salt Eaters*

As in Nielsen's argument that Baraka's writing operates as a time machine, this chapter advances that the phonograph folds time and space, enabling the movement of the postbody. The phonograph performs an important function in Baldwin's narrative by allowing for the presence of Bessie Smith in various scenes throughout the text, creating thresholds and apertures through which the interior lives of his characters are revealed. But perhaps the most famous use of the spatial and temporal power of the phonograph appears in the prologue to Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Ellison explores the spatial and temporal implications of the

narrator's invisibility, for which he utilises musical metaphors and invokes Louis Armstrong, sonically inscribing the narrator's conception of time:

Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible... Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music (8).

Like Baldwin's Harlem beat, the narrator's experience of time is analogous to jazz music, his slipping into the breaks and looking around comparable to the practice of improvisation. What the narrator perceives as Armstrong's invisibility⁴ allows him to transgress any linear or unified sense of time, and to make poetry from this awareness of its multiplicity and simultaneity, suggesting that Armstrong's 'different sense of time', like that of Serres, 'frees language from its linear constraints' (Pacenza 66). Ellison's acknowledgement both of the 'swift imperceptible flowing' and *nodes* of time (like Baraka's crossroads temporal logic) is suggestive of Bachelard's "Intuition of the Instant", in which time is essentially discontinuous, made up of instants and temporal voids, and for whom 'being [is] a synthesis comprising both space and time' (75). This composition of time is important because it allows for the possibility of novelty, of newness: time does not simply persist, but is performed, and like rhythm, it requires gaps. Ellison's temporal jazz framework intimates the *composed* nature of continuity, the rhythmic arrangement of human experience, in which instants can be interpreted as performances. Armstrong's vibrations are disruptions that challenge barriers in space and in time, offering sonic interference and intervention, a break with

historiographic order. This discontinuous and rhythmic sense of time allows Ellison's narrator to engage with an alternative history in a time-bending descent induced by an inadvertent experiment with marijuana and the phonograph:

That night I found myself hearing not only in time, but in space as well. I not only entered the music but descended, like Dante, into the depths. And *beneath the swiftness of the hot tempo there was a slower tempo and a cave and I entered it and looked around and heard an old woman singing a spiritual* (9).

Griffin argues that by the end of Ellison's novel (and thus at its beginning), Invisible Man has found a safe space in black music. It is '[b]y hearing and feeling [that] he can experience the music (and the history and culture it embodies) as safe space'; whilst Armstrong represents an ancestral figure, his music functions as the language of the ancestor (Griffin 134). This ancestral link is supported by the narrator's dialogue with the singer of the spirituals; like Baraka's narrator, Invisible Man seemingly inherits the ability of the ancestor to 'spring up in the air, down into the earth, across water, to heaven, back in history, [and] ahead to freedom' through his experiments with the phonograph (Ramey 142). His descent into music portrays jazz as a medium that allows travel across time and space, rendering a topography of subterranean soundscapes: caves, levels, and dark narrow passages, filled with timbre screams, blaring trumpets, and hectic rhythms, an 'underworld of sound' (*IM* 12). The timbre screams inject a visceral quality into Ellison's sonic schema: as timbre 'refers to the distinct sound of a voice — what Nina Eidsheim calls its "color, texture, and weight" and what Roland Barthes terms its "grain."' (Lordi 68).⁵ The use of this term, then, underscores the materiality of voice and emphasises the physical, bodily production of sound: timbre 'is often described through physical

terms such as “heavy,” “dark,” “light,” and “bright.”” (Lordi 68). This is significant to Ellison’s text because it exerts a materialisation of what was formerly invisible.

Critics such as Claudia Tate and Emily Lordi see the spiritual singer as a guide for the narrator, assisting him ‘along his course to freedom’ (Tate 254).⁶ The singer’s reply to the narrator’s question about the meaning of freedom also suggests the multiplicity and simultaneity of jazz: ‘First I think it’s one thing, then I think it’s another... I guess now it ain’t nothing but knowing how to say what I got up in my head’ (11). Borrowing from Barbara Johnson, Lordi notes that the singer defines freedom as ‘the capacity to express her own conflicting thoughts... she “claim[s] the right” to “[hold] on to more than one story at a time.”’ (84). In her 2013 text, *Black Resonance*, Lordi offers a comparative analysis of the works of Ellison and Mahalia Jackson; for her, the spiritual singer Invisible Man meets underground models ‘the timbre of sincerity with which the narrator will go on to challenge his own listeners — especially as he eulogizes his black friend Tod Clifton’ (83). Clifton’s funeral is an important moment in the novel’s experiment with a postbody poetic; killed by a white police officer, Clifton is heard to speak by the narrator from the confines of his coffin, saying: ‘Tell them to get out of the box’ (458). Lordi notes that Invisible Man’s ‘expressive labor peaks in an act of prosopopoeia, the granting of voice to one who is absent or deceased’, when ‘in a ghostly ventriloquization that recalls Ellison’s opening allusion to Poe, Invisible Man activates Clifton’s voice from within the casket’ (86-87). Lordi discusses the following allusion to Edgar Allan Poe in the opening lines of Ellison’s novel:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of

substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids — and I might even be said to possess a mind' (3).

Lordi argues that Ellison 'signifies on Poe' in this 'subversive citation' by employing the vernacular meaning of the word "spook", used as a racial epithet, 'to "call Poe out" for being haunted by the presence of black people in America' (84). Lordi cites Ellison's essay "Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity", published in 1953 but written in 1946, in which 'Ellison reads Poe's dehumanizing depictions of slaves as attempts to manage this hauntedness' (84). Indeed, Ellison's text plays with ghostly imagery from its beginning; aware of the grave associations of a hole in the ground, the narrator is at pains to assure the reader that, though he may be 'invisible and live in a hole... I am neither dead nor in a state of suspended animation' (6). Accordingly, the novel's opening inscriptions stress Invisible Man's corporeality, his substance.

Writing of sound recordings of poetic performance but applicable to Ellison's use of the phonograph, Charles Bernstein conceives of the 'grammaphonic voice' as a 'ghostly presence... we hear a voice, if not of the dead, then one that sounds present but is absent, a voice that we can hear but that cannot hear us' (144). Steve Pinkerton suggests this ephemeral presence when he argues that the figure of Louis Armstrong, whose music frames Ellison's text, invoked not only in the prologue but at the novel's close, allows for an 'evocation of African American identity as a time-bending, jazz-shaped invisibility' (187). In Ellison's novel, the song functions as both 'aperture' and 'threshold', promoting movement through the text, the narrator's subterranean dwelling, and 'opening onto an evocative spatial arrangement' of African American collective memory, marked by 'spirituals and the

blues, slavery and freedom, hatred and love' (188). However, Pinkerton also praises the physicality of Armstrong's performance, arguing that the 'music itself is somehow corporeal' (191). This physicality is echoed in Invisible Man's desire to feel the vibration of Louis Armstrong's recording 'not only with my ear but with my whole body. I'd like to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong playing and singing "What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue" – all at the same time' (7-8). This urge to feel the vibrations of the music is positioned as an attempt to counteract the 'acoustical *deadness*' in the hole in which Invisible Man hibernates, exercising 'a covert preparation for a more overt action' (8, 13, emphasis added). Ellison's interest in sound technology has led some critics to suggest that he gives primacy to that medium over live performance: Alexander Weheliye argues, for example, that Ellison is 'one of the foremost theorists of sonic Afro-modernity', but roots this in Ellison's engagement with the 'interplay of content and transmission' in sound technologies, concluding that 'Ellison locates the [Benjaminian] aura not in the original musical utterance but in the mode of mechanical reproduction itself' (106). However, Pinkerton claims that Ellison 'invariably emphasizes jazz music's live presence... as essential to the "communal experience"', quoting from Robert O'Meally's edited collection of Ellison's essays *Living with Music* (274), and argues instead that 'the inordinate amount of time Ellison spent worrying over his stereo equipment's sonic fidelity... reflects his abiding obsession with replicating the auratic presence of the originary jazz performance' (204). The narrator's desire for Armstrong's song to be performed by a quintet of recorded voices speaks to Ellison's understanding of jazz as a 'delicate balance struck between strong individual personality and the group' (O'Meally 6), and can be figured as an attempt

to conjure ‘that vital subjectivity that can flourish only in the fertile interstices between the communal and the individual’ (Pinkerton 192). Furthermore, Pinkerton figures this desire within the narrator’s belief that the music ‘had demanded action’ (*IM* 12), asking: ‘What walls, what divisions, would the narrator have tumble under the impact of Armstrong’s horn, amplified and dissonated through five record players blaring at once?’ (Pinkerton 190).

The closing lines of *Invisible Man* are a question of articulation and reflect the politics of representation: ‘Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?’ (581). With this reference to frequencies Ellison conjures the language of airwaves and raises the question of sonic fidelity. Furthermore, *Invisible Man*’s compulsion to fill his subterranean home with light is aligned with a mission for visibility and truth, and the narrator with an inventor:

The truth is the light and light is the truth... when you have lived invisible as long as I have you develop a certain ingenuity. I’ll solve the problem... Though invisible, I am in the great American tradition of tinkers (7).

Through this invocation *Invisible Man* aligns himself with Ford, Edison, and Franklin: he suggests that he will invent a line of ‘gadgets’ to improve his material comfort, engaging with the rhetoric of invention, and styles himself as a “thinker-tinker”, since he possesses both theory and concept (7). It is useful to remember here that ‘an African American inventor [Lewis Howard Latimer] is at the source of electric light technology itself’ (Lordi 94), and that this inventor remains unnamed, and therefore invisible, in Ellison’s text. As Maria Assad explains, Serres posits the aural as a model of “understanding” — in the French, *entendu*, suggesting both hearing and comprehension (23):

Genesis is a book on noise as Ur-noise. Listening to its multiple din is the first step to knowledge... The model of traditional philosophy is seeing; the word derives from the Greek verb *idein* meaning to see. But seeing is intermittent... [it] can be halted by closing one's eyes (22).

Later, Assad insists that 'we seers of ideas have forgotten how to hear and listen' (25). Thus, the invisible narrator's ability to descend into sound and desire to listen to multiple recordings of Armstrong's voice suggests a quest for understanding rooted in sound rather than solely depending upon the reifying visualities of the white gaze. Furthermore, Ellison's references to mechanical invention are the beginnings of his engagement with a theme of dehumanisation and the stifling of individuality within American society. This utilisation of electricity is beyond the functional: the narrator infuses his basement dwelling with light and the sounds of jazz. Located in a border area outside Harlem, Ellison's narrator wires the ceiling of his subterranean home with 1,369 filament bulbs as part of a 'battle' with Monopolated Light and Power (7). Alan Nadel characterises this battle as a 'symbolic assault on the conception of visibility and its attendant privilege, which illuminates white society' (164). The narrator decorates his basement with 'inversions of the white society to which [his] secret space is parasitic' (Nadel 163). The light in *Invisible Man's* basement announces his presence to himself and to the electric company, a literal symbol of power. The narrator desires to fill the space in which he lives with light and with jazz — until he can feel the vibrations of the music, 'not only with my ear but with my whole body' (8), highlighting the physicality of aural experience. The ghostly vibrations emanating from the phonograph also act as a disruption, forcing the body into an abject correlation to

the object, as when the narrator refers to the white man he attacks as ‘a man almost killed by a phantom... Something in this man’s thick head had sprung out and beaten him within an inch of his life’ (5). The black body becomes an invisible postbody on the fringes of existence when looked upon by the *inner* eyes — ‘those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality’ (3) — of the white gaze, and sound becomes a touchstone of alternative interpellation for the narrator: the safe spaces he finds in black music ‘affirm the complexity of black humanity’ (Lordi 81). Ghosts in the phonograph articulate the revolutionary power of the sonic to create time bending, shape-shifting disruptions and interventions in the socio-spatial dialectic.

In his essay “Scratching the Threshold” (2009), Carter Mathes proposes that critical attention should be dedicated to Bambara’s engagement with the phonograph and psychic space in *The Salt Eaters* alongside the prologue to *Invisible Man*. Bambara’s novel shares the preoccupation with sound and vision evident in Ellison’s work. Indeed, Bambara invokes Ellison’s text when Porter muses: ‘They call the Black man The Invisible Man... Our natures are unknowable, unseeable to them... Course, when we look at us with their eyes, we disappear, ya know?’ (158-159). Here, Bambara stresses the implications of invisibility to identity and selfhood, and reinforces her point with a reference to Ellison’s narrator. Additionally, the protagonist of each novel is subject to political forces that seek to use their skills but do not represent their best interests. *Invisible Man* and Velma Henry engage in a psychic struggle against their oppressors, marked by a strong sense of interiority: the former retreats to an underground bunker, the latter withdraws into catatonia. Each text connects spatial, temporal, and sonic schemas,

primarily through the symbolic deployment of the phonograph. Mathes argues that the phonograph is connected to memory, machinery, and voice in Bambara's text:

As she narrates these ambivalent memories and visions, through reference to the "needle in her mind," an imagined phonograph playing the sound of her memories back to her, Velma decides to "lift the needle, to yank the arm away, to pull apart the machinery in favor of her own voice" (Mathes 390).

Articulation is stressed here in terms of the vocal, the bodily, and the mechanics of the phonograph. Bambara's diction emphasises the physical: Velma will 'lift', 'yank', and 'pull apart' the mechanics which offer a reproduction of sound in favour of her own voice (168). There is a sense of the postbody in Velma's conception of the machinery of her mind that speaks with another's voice. Mathes argues that Velma's catatonia — a postbody state — is the consequence (or perhaps the instrument) of her search for 'an idiom of her own', a language that can faithfully represent her personal history and political ideals (390).

Bambara overtly incorporates symbols of temporality in the scenes preceding Velma's suicide attempt, as she describes an hourglass in her kitchen:

To be that sealed — sound, taste, air, nothing seeping in... To pour herself grain by grain into the top globe and sift silently down to a heap in the bottom one... To lie coiled on the floor of the thing and then to bunch up with all her strength and push off from the bottom and squeeze through the waistline of the thing and tip time over for one last sandstorm and then be still, finally be still (19-20).

Velma's desire to 'tip time over', reversing it, is aligned with a contest over the sensory — often perceived as a trigger for memory. Sealed inside the hourglass, the measurement of time is beyond the senses, 'nothing seeping in'; in a state of

fragmentation, 'grain by grain', Velma expresses a wish to infiltrate, traverse and upturn the 'globe'. Mathes points out that 'Velma's removal from noise is equated with the revolutionary action of turning over or freezing time, perhaps the most direct, literal engagement with history one might imagine' (374).⁷ Velma's attack on the regulation of time is coupled with a rejection of sound: her action here is silent. Unlike Baraka's transmission of sonic and kinetic vibrations through time in "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine", Bambara imagines a reversal of the temporal order as a soundless disembodiment. Mathes proposes that in this 'refusal of sound in favor of the stillness of death, Bambara is drawing specific attention to Velma's search for an embryonic language, an inchoate conception of radical change' (347). Velma's initial resistance to sound and embodiment is also articulated through a compulsion to contain herself within domestic symbols, culminating in her mode of attempted suicide: to place her head inside a gas oven. There is a strong sense of defamiliarisation as:

the woman who was her moved from sink to stove to countertop turning things on, turning the radio up. Opening drawers, opening things up. Her life line lying for an instant in the cradle of the scissors' X, the radio's song going on and on and no stop-notes as she leaned into the oven. The melody thickening as she was sucked into the carbon walls of the cave, then the song blending with the song of the gas (18).

The rhythm of the music, with 'no stop-notes', appears to be directing Velma's suicide attempt. Velma's exploration of domestic space figures as her search for an embryonic language and desire for radical change, but ultimately she chooses to end her own life: this gendered space offers her no more favourable alternative to the stillness, or formlessness, of death. Instead, Velma enters a postbody state of

catatonia, her consciousness roaming the spaces of Claybourne and her own personal history.

The search for an alternative language takes Velma through a series of recollections as healer Minnie Ransom attempts to recover her from her catatonic state. These memories are often prompted by the jazz and blues music Minnie plays throughout the healing session, or by 'outside' sounds which propel Velma through a 'kaleidoscope of psychic, imagistic, and phenomenological reflections on her political experience set within an asymmetrical continuum of issues and individuals marking the social and political space of the town' (Mathes 389). These outside sounds include birdsong, as when Sophie Heywood leaves the session, and the sound of drums from 'the pan man in dreadlocks and knitted cap', which 'drifted out over the trees towards the Infirmary, maqaam now blending with the bebop of Minnie Ransom's tapes' (167, 168). Music, Mathes argues, 'becomes a line of interconnection between Velma's interiority and the present space of Claybourne' (389). Velma's personal history is elicited through music, and her memories map the city for the reader, shaping a representation of Claybourne and its inhabitants. Bambara incorporates these social relations into her text, representing the individual psyche as well as introducing the concept of the communal psyche, each articulating a postbody state. This concept can be traced in the activities of 'The Master's Mind' and at the novel's conclusion, when Velma receives her 'gift' from Minnie within a shared psychic space, the limits of which are defined by the fabric of Minnie's shawl. Minnie's shawl encloses Velma in temporal and spatial folds evocative of Serres' multimodal concept of temporality. Indeed, Velma's imagined experience inside the kitchen hourglass also articulates the varied

states of Serres' model of time, which can be a tatter, solid, vaporous, dispersed, fluctuating, and bursting (127). This assemblage of disparate elements delimits the notion of time from the confines of linearity and allows for the multiple and simultaneous temporal experiences exhibited in the communal space of 'The Master's Mind'.

Bambara also demonstrates a concern with urban redevelopment and the notion of progress in her cartographies of the fictional space of Claybourne, Georgia, emphasising the threat of technological advancement to the community and the environment. For example, she renders the destruction of black neighbourhoods in the language of rape and death: 'The bite of the hydraulic bit breaking up potsy courts and basketball courts. Over and over in fuck-you repetition. How long, how long? A gaping hole, a grave, a pit' (73). This scene of urban decay is contrasted with restorative scenes that conjure nature and an ancestor associated with the earth: 'the mud mothers... painting the walls of the cave and calling to her' (7). The mud mothers here function as the spiritual singer in Ellison's text, guiding Velma through the postbody realms of her catatonia. Bambara creates a further guide for her protagonist in the form of spiritual healer Minnie Ransom. Mathes' argument suggests that Bambara's text works to embody the psychic space of memory, as she:

positions sound as a force of confrontation and evasion between Velma and the healing powers of Minnie, as Velma is wary of Minnie striking "the very note that could shatter [her] bones" (371).

A schema of vibration, memory, and bone emerges here, aligning Bambara's protagonist with the narrator of Baraka's story, as each embarks on a temporal

pilgrimage through their own inward histories in order to discover an alternative, personal politics/poetics. Mathes argues that Bambara's depiction of Minnie's healing session renders the cognitive space of 'memory as it emerges through the specific bodily sites of aurality... through the proximity and interaction of sound, mental imagery, and the body created through vibrations of bone' (371). In this configuration, memory becomes the confluence of space, time, and the sonorous body. This embodiment of sound and stress on bodily sites of aurality accords with the work of Schafer, who notes John Cage's ability to hear two sounds even when in an anechoic chamber, one high and one low: 'the high one was my own nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation... There is no such thing as silence' (qtd. in Schafer 10). Furthermore, Schafer reminds us that 'various parts of the body resonate at various frequencies, some in audible range and some below or above' (31), grounding the vibrations that transmit across the pages of Baraka, Baldwin, Ellison, and Bambara — as well as in the subvocalisations of their readers — in bodily experience.

Mathes traces the sonic thresholds implanted in Bambara's text, asking how 'narrative space allow[s] for a mapping of nonlinear historical memories' (367). It can be argued that a nonlinear mapping of historical memories, or "instants" in Bachelard's register, is achieved through the imbrication of the physical and the metaphysical; as Griffin states, the use of ritual healing or *the laying on of hands* provides 'a domain unhindered by time and space' (121). Mathes also posits a relationship between sound and embodiment in his focus on sonic inscription. Velma seems to reject both sound and embodiment as she clings to her 'preference for an undisturbed interiority' dramatised by the catatonic state she enters after

surviving a suicide attempt (Mathes 373). Bambara's narrative moves between the visual and the sonic as she depicts Velma's bid to end her own life, 'highlighting Velma's desire both to "be still" and to exist as light, outside of sound' (Mathes 373):

looking at the glass jars thinking who-knew-what then, her mind taken over, thinking, now, that in the jars was no air, therefore no sound, for sound waves weren't all that self-sufficient, needed a material medium to transmit. But light waves need nothing... can go anywhere in the universe with their independent pictures (Bambara 168).

Velma first imagines an existence inside the glass jar, unavailable to sounds, before challenging this in favour of the more empowering desire to 'be light', able to break the barrier imposed by the glass walls. Bambara extends Ellison's use of light imagery in the prologue to *Invisible Man*, when the narrator tells us: 'Light confirms my reality, gives birth to my form... Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death' (*IM* 6-7).

Velma desires to exist in the form of light, able to travel 'anywhere in the universe', uncontainable and 'independent' (168). Both she and *Invisible Man* conflate light with visibility and visibility: light waves 'carry pictures,' even in the jars there would be 'things to see' (168). However, the passage is marked by Velma's realisation that 'the two forces ultimately can't be divided, for "Sound broke glass" and "Light could cut through even steel"' (Mathes 373), shattering a perceived hierarchy of the senses.⁸ Velma's recognition of the power of sound to break glass resembles Pinkerton's conclusion for *Invisible Man*'s motive to amplify the voice of Louis Armstrong by playing five recordings at once: to tumble down walls, barriers, divides (190). As in Baraka, Baldwin, and Ellison's work, the trope of vibration is

figured here as a powerful method of communication and an alternative sonic and kinetic interpellation for the black inhabitant of the city.

In his influential work, *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003), Brent Hayes Edwards asserts that:

diaspora points to difference not only internally (the ways international black groupings are fractured by nation, class, gender, sexuality, and language) but also externally: in appropriating a term so closely associated with Jewish thought, we are forced to think not in terms of some closed or autonomous system of African dispersal but explicitly in terms of a complex past of forced migrations and racialization — what Earl Lewis has called a history of “overlapping diasporas.” (12-13)

Edwards’ configuration of diaspora stresses multiple diasporic experiences, waves of migration and racialisation, and a politics of difference. This sense of a diasporic gap is productive in a discussion of mapping the city spatially and temporally, carving a way into the interstices of sound, text, and topography. Similarly, the “sounding line” Compton describes in *Bluesprint* (14) is capable of movement beyond the linear into unexpected territories: as this chapter has so far established, the sounding line can move forwards as well as backwards like Baraka’s vibrations; invoke the dead as in the recurring sonic resurrections of Baldwin’s jazz musician; break down spatial and temporal walls and barriers as in *Invisible Man*; or constitute interconnection between the (post)body and landscape in Bambara’s Georgia. The sounding line furthermore echoes across frequencies into the Canadian soundscape; in the following reading of Compton’s work, the sounding line vibrates the urban topography of Vancouver.

Sonorous Bodies: Inscription and Synaesthesia in the Contact Zone

An engagement with the work of R. Murray Schafer enables the development of the idea of a sounding line of interconnection between the postbody and landscape. In his seminal work, *The New Soundscape* (1969), Schafer presents a soundscape of overlapping spaces and sounds in his excavation of the question 'What is music?' and delineates the sonic environment of a twentieth century topography shaped by the development, rise, and volume of expanding cityscapes and sound technologies (1). For example, writing of schizophonia, the term he coins for the dissociation of sound from its point of origin, as seen in radio transmission, Schafer comments that '[v]ocal sound... is no longer tied to a hole in the head but it is free to issue from anywhere in the landscape' (44). Schafer's observation focuses on sound produced by the body, leading us to consider its relationship to this new landscape, which is seemingly able to speak with the human voice, and the implications of this stripping of the voice from the body for human subjectivity. Schafer is concerned by schizophonia's potential to naturalise a lack of correspondence between the physiological and the psychological aspects of sound, because, he argues, such a correspondence has historically:

helped us to feel into the depths of sounds with our muscles and nerves. And since we produce these sounds with our bodies we have an instinctive sympathetic feeling when others produce sound for our benefit and pleasure (47).

Schafer thus posits the aural as a conduit of 'instinctive' human emotion, rooting the ability to feel for others in physical sensation, to 'feel into the depths of sounds

with our muscles and nerves', evoking empathy. Ergo, the dissociation of sound from its point of origin may also lead to disconnection among people. The rest of this chapter harnesses Schafer's schizophonic sensibilities to analyse the postbody experiments of Black Canadian spoken word poetry, taking sound technologies such as the phonograph, tape recorder, and dub plate as central points of analysis. Schafer considers the effects of hearing one's own recorded voice to identity, noting that '[y]ou can get outside yourself and critically inspect your voiceprint. Is that stammering and quirky sound really me, you say?' (46). The notion that you can 'get outside yourself' bespeaks the postbody coordinates of the disembodied human voice, and Schafer conceives the implications for a sonic construction of identity in the question that immediately follows — is that sound really me?

In Ellison's text, the narrator's retreat to an underground bunker filled with light and jazz is an effort to counteract and protest his socio-political invisibility. His desire to feel the vibration of five Louis Armstrong recordings advances a notion of subjectivity constructed from bodily, vocal, and mechanical articulations, as his interaction with the phonograph allows communion with the spiritual singer. The work of spoken word and turntable poets such as Compton extends and contemporialises the metaphor of the phonograph invoked by Ellison. In his critical work, *After Canaan*, Compton adapts Schafer's concept of "schizophonia", which focuses on the negative consequences of such a dislocation,⁹ to reflect the more positive attributes of the experiment: the definition he offers for his "schizophonophilia" is 'the love of audio interplay, the pleasure of critical disruptions to natural audition, the counter-hegemonic affirmation that can be achieved through acoustic intervention' (199). The ambition of Ellison's narrator to

listen to multiple recordings of Armstrong's performance simultaneously can be interpreted as a desire for just such a counter-hegemonic affirmation through acoustic intervention. While Schafer reinforces the value of sound's emergence from the body, and worries about the psychological impact of dissociating voiceprint from voicebox, Compton details the potential for liberation from prevailing social values and structures in such an exercise.

Compton's *After Canaan* essay, "Turntable Poetry, Mixed-Race, and Schizophonia", describes his performances as part of the Contact Zone Crew, a project in hip hop turntablism with musical collaborator Jason de Couto. Their moniker emerges from an engagement with Mary Louise Pratt's work on pedagogy and culture, "Arts of the Contact Zone" (1991). Pratt writes of the 'contact zone' as a crossroads, a site of learning, and uses the term "safe houses" to refer to 'social and intellectual spaces' affording 'temporary protection from legacies of oppression' (40). We can interpret Compton's references to Pratt as indicative of his vision for the function of dub poetry in British Columbia, and especially Vancouver ('my Vancouver' (*After 190*)), in the black urban experience of Western Canada. As Heather Smyth notes in her essay "The Black Atlantic Meets the Black Pacific" (2014), the 'face of pressing and inherited diasporic narratives... render black Western Canadian experience... "Afroperipheral"', utilising Compton's neologism to highlight Black Canada's position outside the diasporic master narrative (389).

The recuperative function of the contact zone is best exemplified by Compton's social activism, especially his project to restore and remember Hogan's Alley, a historic neighbourhood in downtown Vancouver subject to demolition and

erasure from the late 1960s onwards, initially to make space for a new highway.

For many, Hogan's Alley was the heart of the black community in Vancouver, and the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project (HAMP) gives testimony to the community that was fragmented with its destruction; as Guy Debord and Asger Jorn tell us, 'elements of the cultural past must be "reinvested" or disappear' (Knabb 55).

Through artistic and cultural endeavours such as the annual Hogan's Alley Poetry Festival and Black Strathcona digitisation project, and in the spirit of Pratt's pedagogical philosophy — which promotes 'experiments in transculturation... the redemption of the oral; ways for people to engage with suppressed aspects of history (including their own histories), [and] ways to move into and out of rhetorics of authenticity' (40) — HAMP forges a space for engagement, a "safe house" where black history is not just memorialised but recovered and reinvested in the contemporary Black Canadian poetry scene and the community: counter-hegemonic affirmation through acoustic and narrative intervention.

Compton describes a particular Contact Zone Crew performance in which he mixes a voice recording of his poem "The Reinventing Wheel", collected in *Performance Bond* (2004), with other recorded samples; the project typically 'performs live mixes of original dub plate poetry with crate-dug hip hop, jazz, and spoken word vinyl' ("Contact"). This version of the performance with De Couto is the "Rolling Wave Mix," arranged on four turntables. Compton's main aims in conceiving "The Reinventing Wheel" — the name suggesting the transformative power of the turntable — were to 'make the voiced poem an art-object, outside of my body'; 'rather than performing *from* the body, to let the body perform *upon* the work'; and to view his own poem as 'an object of *détournement*' (*After 192*). Here,

Compton explicitly experiments with the posthumanist ‘possibility that the voice can be taken out of the body and placed into a machine’ (Hayles 75); his situationist ambitions for the poem again underscore a concern with cultural reinvestment, and suggest a connection between the human body and movement through city space in a Western outpost of diasporic experience.

We must pause to consider ‘the redemption of the oral’ posited by Pratt (40). In her essay, “Voices Out of Bodies, Bodies Out of Voices” (1997), N. Katherine Hayles offers a succinct *précis* of the oral/textual, and sonic/visual binary hierarchies when she states that ‘[o]ne signifies a sensory response; the other, a writing technology. The mind struggles to make them equivalent’ (74). Here, orality and aurality are connected by the bodily operations for the functions of sound; the former signifying ‘voice producing sound’, the latter ‘ear hearing sound’ (74). Hayles advocates that we reorient our understanding of aurality and writing ‘not as indicating separate domains but as suggesting a bodily response to certain literary possibilities’ (74). Not only is writing a physical act of material production, using our bodies to inscribe a page with ink as vocal chords and mouth muscles announce the spoken word, but the modes of recording and dissemination, tape recorder or phonograph, have their cousins in the printing press or laptop. Hayles notes that the agency of the body is often written out of the act of writing: ‘narrative fiction leaps over the technologies that produce it... and represents the external world as if this act of representation did not require a material basis for its production’ (91). The invisibility of this process returns us to Ellison’s materialisation of space and sound, demonstrated by the narrator’s desire to fill his subterranean sanctuary with the vibrations and *détournements* of jazz, and the

inscription of Armstrong's multiple and simultaneous performances on vinyl, which challenge and defy any singular transcription or notation. Additionally, Hayles uses Garrett Stewart's understanding that the practice of reading also happens 'in the body, particularly in the vocal apparatus that produces subvocalization during silent reading... [and is] essential to literary language' (Hayles 74), to make a three-fold argument: the body enacts 'suppressed sound'; reading is 'akin to the interior monologue', which humans engage in 'to assure ourselves we exist'; and the significance of subvocalised sound has implications not only for literary language, but human subjectivity (75). In her ontologies, Hayles consistently links reading with consciousness, embodiment, and identity in ways traditionally connected to the voice.

For Compton, the modality of bodily, visual, and aural imbrication is complicated by the 'consumption of racialized bodies', a 'central part of the capitalist spectacle, [in which] consumers favor "authentic" racialized creators' (*After* 193-194). This may be what leads Compton to characterise 'Jazz as / evisceration' in "The Reinventing Wheel" (102). In his poem, Compton examines 'how hip hop evinces a shift in the black literary tradition of connecting form to the people's music' (*After* 190). Associating Langston Hughes with the blues and the New Negro Movement, and Baraka with jazz and the Black Arts Movement, Compton notes that these adjunctive literary-musical movements 'produced unique vocabularies and idioms', but that these 'were relatively slow to evolve and were disseminated gradually across North America' (190). Hip hop, however, rapidly and radically facilitates and creates 'new vernaculars' due to the 'globalisation of American culture... the dissemination of electronic and digital reproduction

technologies; and what might be called postmodern “re-mix culture” — the pervasive use of sampling in contemporary music’ (190). These factors have led to the deterritorialization of ‘the in-group quality of black speech... [which is] used and re-wrought everywhere’ (190). Anxiety as to the deterritorialization of black music and its impact on the communal element of black cultural production is long standing, and is evidenced by the critical attention dedicated to Ellison’s interest in sound technology, for example by Weheliye and Pinkerton, cited above. Hayles offers historical insight into the development of sound technologies and their role in the gradual deterritorialization of the black vernacular suggested by Compton. Furthermore, she contextualises Ellison’s ‘obsession with replicating the auratic presence of the originary jazz performance’ (Pinkerton 204) through sonic reproduction when she explains that: ‘Long after writing dissociated presence from inscription, voice continued to imply a subject who was present in the moment and in the flesh’ (76). Technological revolutions altered this state, but whilst telephone and radio allowed the voice to travel over distances, erasing the need for a subject who was present, ‘[s]peaker and listener... had to share the same moment in time... [and] thus continued to participate in the phenomenology of presence through the simultaneity that they produced and that produced them’ (Hayles 76). The phonograph was not tethered by this requirement for temporal simultaneity, functioning ‘primarily as a technology of inscription, reproducing sound’ (Hayles 76). Invisible Man’s desire to listen to five Armstrong recordings at once can then be seen as an effort to recuperate a sense of simultaneity, of presence, in the performance. Hayles describes this audio technology as a ‘rigid disk that allowed neither the interactive spontaneity of telephone nor the ephemerality of radio’, a

conundrum that the audiotape solved by allowing ‘erasure and rewriting’ (76).

Despite the concern Compton voices over the disjunctive proliferation and dissemination of hip hop vernaculars, his work further extends the sonic revolution signalled by the tape recorder by interacting with his poetry and other artefacts on the turntable, reinscribing written and spoken words originating from a multiplicity of temporal moments by manipulating the rigid disks (dub plates) with his body — with his hands — sometimes in an improvisational manner in response to an audience, invoking the interactive spontaneity of radio and telephone.

A phenomenology of presence is conveyed in Antiguan-Québécoise Tanya Evanson’s spoken word poem “The African All of It”, included in the anthology *The Great Black North* (2013). In a blending of bodily and vocal articulation, Evanson describes becoming comfortable performing without referring to the page: ‘There’s something to be said about taking your own work into your body, and then offering it, fully, with your body and your voice’. Evanson’s articulations appear to take an opposite approach to Compton’s ‘goal of dislocating the poem from my body in performance’. In her poem, performed at the Vancouver Writer’s Festival in 2013, Evanson first commands the audience to close their eyes, then take a deep breath; she audibly exhales before she recites:

I polish myself to be bright and blinding
Some can see me, from others I take sight
When I speak in tongues, none work better than silence
I am listening. I am listening.

The voice can lock but instruments unlock
With the swing of an arm, a pendulum hips
To manipulate breath, control internal chords takes faith
I am listening. I am listening (147).

Like Bambara and Ellison, Evanson imbricates the bodily, the visual, and the aural. With the opening lines of the poem, Evanson appeals to light and visibility, enacting the role of the narrator, she is 'bright and blinding'. Her assertion that she takes sight (along with her audience's cooperative sightlessness) elicits Ellison's conception of invisibility, which 'occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come into contact' (3), and inverts Bambara's notion that '[t]hey haven't got the eyes for us. Course, when we look at us with their eyes, we disappear, ya know?'" (159). If we replace an implied racial binary with the dyad of audience and performer, the 'they' of the audience give Evanson their eyes on command. Evanson's insistence that she takes sight, then, indicates a degree of agency and power.

Evanson's poem is formally suggestive of the spirituals, following a hymnal structure. Its tetrameter of four lines, found in the spirituals and influencing the sixteen bar blues, emulate the patterns of black music. Additionally, Evanson's repetition of 'I am listening, I am listening', followed by a silent space, is redolent of antiphony, a call and response refrain that is silenced as the orator performs both parts of the refrain. In *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Paul Gilroy contends that antiphony:

symbolises and anticipates (but does not guarantee) new, non-dominating social relationships. Lines between self and other are blurred and special forms of pleasure are created as a result of the meetings and conversations that are established between one fractured, incomplete, and unfinished racial self and others (79).

Although Evanson enacts both the call and response of the poem, silencing the antiphonal impulse, the performer is not necessarily dominant, signified by the

phrase 'I am listening' and the inclusion of a gap in which the audience may "speak" or even subvocalise a response. Despite the tension between the refrain 'I am listening' and a lack of audible response, it can be argued that the subvocalisations of the audience debarise the relationship between the participants in the performance and their communications (Evanson can speak in the silent tongue that her audience responds with), closing the space between audience and speaker.

Similarly, the lines that conclude the first stanza are followed by a silence lasting seventeen seconds. In the middle of the following line, Evanson turns the poetic verse into song on the word 'but', suggesting the rhythm of the body's movements and highlighting the voice as instrument. Her interaction with the audience brings them into the physical expression of the poem, further shattering any idea of a binary between the two, as we close our eyes and listen — in faith; Evanson both takes the audience's sight and manipulates their breath, involving their bodies in the poem's visceral quality. Furthermore, Evanson shifts roles with the audience; not only can they no longer watch the performance, but they must share their role as listener with the poet, whose refrain 'I am listening' is followed by silence in which the audience may also be listened to and scrutinised without their knowledge in a panoptic revolution of the performer-audience dynamic. Evanson's structured silence creates a space of apparent sonic absence buttressed on each side by aural (I am listening) and oral (the voice) references, making it a blended dialogic space, filled with the aural activity of listening. The oral here can also be carceral, the voices locked within the body and requiring free movement in order to be expressed. In the second stanza, Evanson highlights the physicality of language and the sonority of the temporal: the kinesis of the body, arms and hips

moving rhythmically like a pendulum measuring time, manipulating breath and controlling the vocal chords, positioning the body as an instrument of sonic inscription.

Further suggesting this link between the body and sonic inscription, Pinkerton characterises jazz as ‘a worldly, profane art’, borrowing from *Living with Music* to suggest that:

“[in] its capacity to make the details of sex convey meanings which touch upon the metaphysical,” its unique transcendence is paradoxically grounded in an earthy embodiment, and the music itself is somehow corporeal; one aspect of Armstrong’s heroism is that “he emphasizes the physicality of his music with sweat, spittle and facial contortions” (191).

The phonograph contorts time and space, liberating the recording from the temporal and geographical coordinates of the originary performance. But the corporeality of Armstrong’s performance, as in the physical communion of breath between Evanson and her audience, can only be appreciated in its full capacity if the audience shares a phenomenology of presence with the performer. Audio-visual recordings of the same performances can replicate only part of their communal and corporeal character. This tension can be traced if one views a recording of Clifton Joseph’s “Poem for John Coltrane”, performed at Ontario’s Words Aloud Festival in 2007. Joseph’s poem vocally and bodily illustrates the mobile, untranscribable and unnotational capacities of jazz. The poem is a wordless vocal performance that is invested with bodily and oral syncopation, movement, and dialogue that cannot be inscribed on the page. As this chapter does with Evanson’s performance, Joseph’s poem can be documented around, reproduced in sound recordings and on film, but can only be appreciated in its entirety if the

audience occupies the same time and space as the performer — even the camera lens limits our conception of Joseph’s movements in their physical totality. In paying homage to the body of work of jazz performer John Coltrane, Joseph physically and vocally articulates a body inscribed by the syncopations of jazz.

In terms of the inscription of black culture and concern around the proliferation of its sonic reproduction, Compton identifies a corollary ‘between the global denaturing of hip hop and the black experience itself in western Canada — a periphery of the diaspora’ (*After* 190). Compton explores this corollary through turntablism and the trope of hip hop fragmentation, which presents an opportunity to ‘employ the inevitable and beautiful “inauthenticities” that these conditions of inorganic reception encourage’ (190). In “The Reinventing Wheel”, he writes:

I echo New York back
like a code-cracker.
Reality-hacker. A Crusoe.
Cuts cued.
I intervene
by plugging in
code, tapping
Babylonian routes. My cuneiform (*Performance* 108).

Compton’s use of hyphenation reflects what Kobena Mercer describes as the ‘hyphenated character of diaspora identities’ (qtd. in Smyth 392), and offers a blended and unifying space, inverting the breath in a sprung rhythm. The hyphen syncopates Compton’s lines, bespeaking the body: Steven Tracy stresses the corporeality of syncopation by casting it as the heartbeat of black music, occupying the space between breaths, concluding that ‘Louis Armstrong is what happens’ in that space. Rather than viewing American cultural influences as colonising Canada,

a common perception, Compton positions American culture within frameworks of defamiliarisation and communication, as he echoes New York back like a code-cracker, able to read, respond to, explore, and penetrate, or “hack”, the language of the American metropolis. Compton is able to do this through the power of inscription, ‘plugging in code’ and ‘tapping Babylonian routes’, the ‘cuneiform’ of the final quoted line. Evanson’s “The African All of It” also harnesses this symbol of inscription, asserting: ‘Whatever your appearance I am listening / Be it air or cuneiform I am listening’ (147). Here Evanson both listens to sounds that are communicated through air (or breath), and subverts the binary between visual and oral modalities by *listening* to, or subvocalizing, a system of writing inscribed into stone or clay. Such a synaesthetic conception of the cuneiform is compatible with the phonograph record, inscribed with sound. The following analysis will argue that, through their experimentation with sonic inscription, Black Canadian writers forge new cartographies of identity and retrieve histories of denied racial violences, and contest a limited critical allowance for Canadian blackness.

Tracking the Postbody: the Vévéfication of the Reinventing Wheel

Both the spectral figure and sound recording technologies act as what I have termed postbody projections: they exist beyond, but can be an extension of, the body and its capacities. This can be traced in the spatial, temporal, and sonic mapping of jazz sounds into vinyl, emulated in the textual terrain of Esi Edugyan’s 2011 novel *Half Blood Blues*. Edugyan uses the symbol of the phonograph record as a corollary to her narrator’s memories of playing with a group of jazz musicians in

Nazi-occupied Europe. The recovery of a lost phonograph record has an additional function as a plot device to return Baltimorean jazzman Sidney Griffiths to modern-day Paris. Edugyan blends the narrative topography with the topography of the city by emphasising the spatial and temporal fissures which connect Sidney's dual narrative. This connection reaches its apex in the survival of the recording, developing the trope of the gap to include the aural, as the performance it captures is incomplete: 'there are actual pieces of the performance missing — those were pressed off by Griffiths' bass strings boring into the lacquer' (52). Here, Sidney enacts his role as narrator, erasing some notes from history and preserving others. The duality of the narrative is reinforced as we move towards the revelation of the role Sidney plays in the fate of musical protégé Hieronymus Falk, when he tells us: 'Time ain't no steady thing... It is a *changeable* thing, brother' (289). Sidney's narrative power allows him to negotiate the ghosts of the past as the novel progresses towards a present-tense climax: summarising the novel's premise, Sid tells us: 'if that ain't a ghost story, I never heard one' (35). Edugyan also invokes the spirit of Louis Armstrong in the novel, incorporating him as a character in the narrative; Sidney's interpretive capacities are further emphasised as he adopts the role of translator between Armstrong and Afro-German protégé Hiero. Edugyan inherits Ellison's vision of Armstrong as her novel exploits and explores the sense of African American identity as a time-bending, jazz-shaped invisibility within a transnational context. It is important to underscore that despite Pinkerton's grounding of the figure of Armstrong within African American frameworks of identity, the utilisation of African American artists is not uncommon in Canadian literature. Whilst insisting on their separateness, George Elliott Clarke emphasises

African American and African Canadian commonalities, as they ‘share a history of marginality that has impinged on the constructions of their literatures’ (*Odysseys* 74). Clarke thus recognises the embrace of useful African American models and influences by Black Canadian writers — especially those found in black music (an example Clarke cites is Ma Rainey) — and we see this in Edugyan’s rendering of Armstrong, Compton’s “hacking” of the New York music scene and ironic invocation of James Brown (discussed below), and Clifton Joseph’s “Poem for John Coltrane”.

Compton’s performance employs electro-acoustic technologies, such as the dub plate, to “unlock” the voice, but these instruments do not supplant the body, as, like Edugyan, he stresses the communion between both to produce the art-object: his body performs *upon* the work. However, the dub plate can be said to operate as a postbody incarnation of his voice. In her article, Hayles questions whether the tape recorder can ‘be understood as a surrogate body’, and if so, ‘does the body become a tape recorder?’ (75). This question began to emerge with the *audio-poème* compositions of musician Henri Chopin in the early twentieth century (Bök 132), and in literature, notably after 1950 in the work of William S. Burroughs; Compton’s work continues to experiment with this notion. In *After Canaan*, he writes:

My pre-recorded voice and poem is broken and re-broken, arranged and re-arranged, combined and re-combined with a shifting repertoire of other sources. Between us, the artists, and you, the audience, is the material poem — on the tables, under discussion, and subject to revision by the nature of the performance’s form. It is in our crate, waiting for us to position it (194).

Compton's postbody poetics break the historical link between vocal and bodily presence; his voice is 'displaced', and thus, if we follow Hayles' argument, his body 'metonymically participated in the transformations... If voice could be transported through time and spliced in with different sounds, the body-as-tape-recorder could also undergo time delay and mutation' (78). Not only can the voice 'persist through time outside the body, confronting the subject as an externalized other' (Hayles 78), but, as Compton's articulation of his work suggests, the 'material poem — on the tables' and in the 'crate' works as a positionable, material, postbody that can be (re)broken, (re)arranged, and (re)combined in Compton's sonic schema, a 'play of reproduction and displacement' (Hayles 83). Compton's description of the spatial coordinates of his performance is strikingly similar to that of a medical operation, with the body of work 'on the tables', waiting to be positioned. The storage of the materials in crates, along with the activity described as crate-digging for sample tracks, intimate something both corporeal and carceral, even suggestive of the grave.

Compton's language is redolent of Hayles' discussion of Burroughs' *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962), in which a doctor extracts parasites from the narrator's body in a graphic scene wherein the parasites stand for "pre-recordings" that are '[e]ntwined into the human flesh... [and] may be thought of as social conditioning' (Hayles 86). Hayles elaborates: 'when the body is always already fallen, divided within itself... it is subject to occupation and expropriation by a variety of parasitic forms, both cultural and physical' (86). Compton's relocation of his voice from body to machine enacts the doctor's stripping of the parasites which are 'entwined into the human flesh'. His manipulations of the pre-recorded voice in

his performance, then, is a contortion also of the parasitic power of social conditioning, as he resituates and remixes their messages in a poetic out-of-body experience:

While the poem stays the same... and the vocal artefact is the same (the dub plate), it is with the paratactical placement of various found audio samples that the original poem acquires slight variations in meaning (*After* 195).

Additionally, Compton's description of handling the dub plates creates a contact zone between the body and the disembodied voice: 'my fingers touch a physical impression of my voice' (192), whilst De Couto 'scratches' the threshold between them. The tactile nature of the dub plate expressed here is similar to the material intervention of Edugyan's narrator on the *Half Blood Blues* recording, parts of the performance erased by his 'bass strings boring into the lacquer' (52). This would align Compton with the storyteller of Edugyan's tale, selecting works for reinvention and reinvestment over others. Compton also underscores the sense of temporal erosion in the practice of pressing dub plates which echoes the temporal slippage and fissures of Edugyan's novel: dub plates degrade more quickly than vinyl records, but are cheaper and quicker to press. Compton notes that:

It is kind of an auto-destructive art... the acetate corrodes rapidly after continued contact with the oils and acids naturally found on human fingers... I think of this impermanence as part of the performance, yet another echo of instability, mutability, and temporality (192).

Edugyan's characterisation of the function of the narrator through this symbolic erasure of part of the record and Compton's integration or acceptance of impermanence as part of the performance are compatible with Burroughs' belief in

the revolutionary potential of sound technology. Writing specifically of the tape recorder, according to Hayles, '[t]he inscription of sound in a durable medium suited his belief that the word is material, while its malleability meant that interventions were possible that could radically change or eradicate the record' (91). Compton's use of the dub plate to remix and 'cut up' snatches of sound and textual readings extends this sense of malleable interventionism. As recordings are a permanent imprint of something temporary or fleeting in nature, Compton's temporising of the permanent through his use of dub-plates-as-positionable-postbody reverses this process: the body corrodes, destroys, and degrades the postbody. Additionally, the 'scratching' of recordings is reminiscent of the activity of scratching cuneiform on stone, which both Compton and Evanson use to articulate a heightened critical receptivity to sound.

An exploration of Compton's use of the ideogram aids our appreciation of the flexible and liberatory effects of a synaesthetic understanding of the cuneiform, and this sense of the impermanence of language. For example, Compton conjures the *vévé* for Legba in a number of works, including his long poem "Rune", collected in *Performance Bond* (2004). In Haitian voodoo, Legba opens a metaphysical doorway for communion between humans and spirits, facilitating communication in all human languages (*Bluesprint* 274) — providing a contact zone. "Rune" features a conversation between two modes of recording technology, Analogue and Digital, subtitled "Vévé", in which Compton references Barbadian poet and theorist Kamau Brathwaite's suggestion that voodoo marks the emergence of an Afro-Caribbean language 'after the Middle Passage blotted the African languages out' (*Performance* 116). About the *vévé* signifying Legba, "Analogue" states: 'It's magic. It's more

than language, it's sorcery, or worship. It's a portal between worlds' (118). The "analogical" desire for 'a new kind of language' (119) that is not written in ink, but is 'an ephemeral language that can drift away in the wind or be eaten by birds' and has the power to 'say things we can't think of' suggests a movement away from printed literacies (121). As Richard Cavell explains, 'while the ideogram is a written form, its sculptural qualities related it to the synaesthesia of speech'; additionally, Marshall McLuhan highlights the kinetic quality of the ideogram, distinguishing it from phonetic letters as 'a vortex that responds to lines of force' (qtd. in Cavell, *McLuhan* 137).¹⁰ Compton's use of the *vévé* in "Rune" reflects this sense of a synaesthetically-invested ideogram as vortex; like the jazz sounds of Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith, the ideogram operates as a portal through time and space.

There is a tension perhaps between the longing for an ephemeral language expressed in Compton's "Rune" and his embrace of sound technologies, which preserve and reproduce language. This tension is partially resolved by Compton's use of the dub plate, which corrodes as it is handled and played, and by his experimentation with the processes of deterritorialization and defamiliarisation, which estrange works from the cultural-spatial specificities in which they were produced. In his essay "The Reinventing Wheel" (2003), Compton contextualises this tension through the use of a postbody poetic:

[t]he idea is not to break, or even to preserve, but to repeat; and to celebrate repetition... Where is agency? Perhaps in the doubling: I enjoy the idea of transforming my voice (myself, that is) into a static disc to be manipulated by the later me, the next me, from above. The remix is a way of — in one moment and one performance — re-enacting the manipulation

of history and source culture. In *The Reinventing Wheel*, this happens in the body of one man made into two voices by the turntables.

Similarly, Burroughs' work worries the threshold between material body and postbody voice; anticipating the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida on the effect of 'discursive formations' upon the physical world by a decade, Burroughs imagined 'the word as the body's "Other Half"' (Hayles 87). The narrator of *The Ticket That Exploded* laments that humans have 'lost the option of silence... Try to achieve even ten seconds of inner silence. You will encounter a resisting organism that *forces you to talk*' (49). This adds an interesting further dimension to Evanson's performance of "The African All of It", in which she compels her audience to maintain over ten seconds of silence: Burroughs' narrative suggests that each audience member's interior monologue becomes a part of a larger poetic dialogue within the silent space of the performance, a space that enacts the body's "Other Half", the word. Burroughs' text begins with 'an account made by inseparable companions' (Hayles 87): 'the sound of his voice and his image flickering over the tape recorder are as familiar to me as the movement of my intestines the sound of my breathing the beating of my heart' (1). The absence of punctuation in Burroughs' description emphasises the interconnectedness of the (interior) movements, the sound (of respiration), the beat of the human body (syncopation), and in turn the imbrication of voice, image, and tape recorder in the narrator's companion. If the companion represents Burroughs' 'Other' half constituted by 'the word' colonising the body, then Burroughs posits an understanding of language that is sonic, visual, and able to occupy a postbody space.

The body and the 'word' are just such inseparable companions in Evanson's poem, with its emphasis on breathing and voice and use of symbols such as instruments, internal chords, and swinging pendulums. Evanson adds a mechanical element to her poetry with these references, the 'instrument' that unlocks could well be the tape recorder, recording and disseminating the word, a way of externalising dialogue to, as Burroughs describes, 'get it out of your head and into the machines' (*Ticket* 213). Thus Evanson utilises sound technologies to disseminate her work; as well as making chapbooks, she presses CDs and uploads videos to her YouTube channel. Hayles describes Burroughs' process as an attempt to 'stop the monologue, rewrite or erase the pre-recordings, and extricate the subject from the parasitic invasion of the Other Half' (87). Compton's use of the dub plate can be interpreted as an effort to erase the pre-recordings of an inherited legacy of culture under colonisation, to externalise, rewrite, and re-codify prevailing discursive formations through a process he likens to *détournement*: 'to be able to re-cast my own original poem in light of later dialectical turns' (*After* 195). In the print poem, Compton also recognises the relationship between the body and the word, writing:

The word is the body
of Osiris, it's spliced. A communion
is happening worldwide, a whirlwind
of performances, black English, black expropriation
scattered to the four corners. Every ear shall here.
The words of the prophets are written in graf.
James Brown never said, "Say it loud,
I'm mixed-race in a satellite of the U.S. and proud." (*Performance* 106)

Compton's appeal for the representation of oblique kinds of blackness is articulated in his ironic utilisation of African American icon James Brown, and he characterises his art here as defamiliarising a culture of identity politics, supplanting Brown's 'black' with a hybrid and psychogeographic locus. His line 'Every ear shall here' phonetically combines place and sound, splicing sonic and spatial dialectics and suggesting a diasporic invocation of blackness, 'scattered to the four corners', audible everywhere. This conceptual blending of aurality and geography is analogous to Schafer's mobile understanding of a topography able to speak with the human voice, which can 'issue from anywhere in the landscape' (44) — Compton completes the dialogic transaction by highlighting the processes of aural receptivity to such a voice, suggesting the antiphonal impulse. Further, the ear becomes a portal for the entry of 'black English, black expropriation' in the spliced body; Compton's invocation of Osiris, the Egyptian God of the afterlife, casts language as a metaphysical hinterland between life and afterlife (or postbody), positioning black sounds as a revolutionary, transformative, and transportive sonic lexicon. Compton's characterisation of this re-casting of his poetry within a new ensemble 'in light of later dialectical turns' as a process of *détournement* is also interesting because his choice of language suggests that other situationist paradigm, the *dérive*. Debord's art practices, such as his 1959 psychogeographic text art project with Asger Jorn, *Memoires*, can be seen as an influential force in the art of digital remixing analogous to the Burroughs/Gysin "cut up" method. The publication is famous for its sandpaper cover, signifying the importance not only of the use of "found" objects, but also the abrasive textured-textuality of the work, akin to De Couteau's method of "scratching" spoken samples as commentary, while

the choice of music can 'leaven the lexical meanings and sonically enjambed samples' (*After* 198). Hayles asserts that manipulating sound by such methods 'becomes a way of producing a new kind of subjectivity' (94). Thus splicing becomes a tool for liberation, freeing the black voice and black subjectivity from conventional sensory, spatial, and temporal boundaries.

Whilst Hayles asserts that the 'voice that finally issues from the tape recorder sounds not so much postmodern as it does posthuman' (94), according to Compton, the phonograph is a tool for celebrating the denaturalisation of sound, 'a Brechtian machine in its very making' (*After* 199). He elaborates:

Radios, CD players, and laptops are boxes — devices of enclosure — whereas the phonograph always seemed to me to be a machine turned inside-out; a machine whose workings are always visible, whose interface is literally tangible, and whose production of sound is visceral. The body of a phonograph, like the body of a racialized object, can never close (199).

Compton's interest in the open body of the phonograph is evident in his poetry, as when the narrator of "The Reinventing Wheel" asks: 'Is the hole in the machine ghostly, / the lapse in the record?' (*Performance* 102). This ghostliness develops his use of the figure of Osiris; supernatural imagery ('Zombification. / Dancing in the low-ceilinged cargo hold' (106)) and further references to the afterlife ('There is immortality / in the track... The groove / moving the text' (103)) are found throughout the poem and connected to a spatial configuration of sound.

Compton's ghosts are quasi-material, zombies dancing in cargo holds — a reference to the Middle Passage — a sonic impulse capable of 'moving the text': 'The drum / has gotten ghost. But where was the death?' (103). Lisa Mansell notes that '[m]ergers of the ghost and the physical not only demolish culturally constructed

binaries but create a blended conceptual space in between these positions — a post-body, a hyphen, a both'. According to Mansell, while the trope of the ghost, the spectre, or the apparition is often read as a 'sinister manifestation of a destabilized identity', it can also have positive ramifications, celebrating 'our plural, fragmented and interconnected position as subjects'. Compton's understanding of the inside-out, visible, tangible, and visceral phonograph echoes Ellison's use of the motif in the prologue of *Invisible Man*, where the narrator insists that his invisibility:

occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come into contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes... you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder if you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds (3-4).

Ellison gives invisibility a tangible and corporeal locus in the construction of the viewer's 'inner eyes', burying sight beyond our field of vision: like Evanson's speaker, the narrator is not only figured as invisible, but blinding. The narrator's conception of himself as a phantom 'in other people's minds' can be interpreted as diminishing his physical and tangible presence; however, this quasi-material state and the act of haunting suggested by Ellison's diction can actually expand the phenomenology of presence into the postbody realm, where the narrator is able to challenge the physical boundaries of existence. This notion is compatible with Pinkerton's assessment of the power of Armstrong's horn 'amplified and dissonated through five record players blaring at once' to break down walls and barriers (190). Similarly, the paradoxical juxtaposition of the tangible and visceral phonograph and the ghostliness of postbody sounds moving through the grooves of the record further 'demolish culturally constructed binaries' (Mansell) and forge a blended

space for the expression and celebration of plural, hybrid, and mobile sounds/identity formations, in an episode of “schizophonophilia”.

The spectre of the ghost in sound is also presented in the opening of Compton’s chapter in a section subtitled Phono/Sound/Graph/Writing. He begins by discussing the opening of the Contact Zone Crew’s performance which uses non-synchronous extracts of his poem “The Reinventing Wheel”, and samples a podcast by scientific journalist Brian Dunning on sine waves, ‘randomly modulated synthetic sounds’, in which some listeners discern paranormal messages, or “electronic voice phenomena” (*After* 183). The sample demonstrates how, after the listener is given a suggestion as to what the sine waves “say”, the listener finds a sonic pattern to corroborate the suggestion. Compton describes it as ‘a sonic version of a visual afterimage’ (183). Watching a recording of a performance from 2008 reveals the efficacy of this method: having heard the pattern, it is not possible to *unhear* it when the sine waves are replayed. Dunning explains that this is known as “pareidolia,” the innate human susceptibility to finding patterns in naturally random stimulus, like seeing faces or the bordered shapes of nations in passing clouds’ (*After* 183-184). Burroughs’ tape recorder experiments also stray into the paranormal and sonic patterning: Hayles suggests that Burroughs’ practice of reading from his books and splicing them with music played backwards anticipated those ‘Christian fundamentalists who hear Satanic messages hidden in records’ (90). Interestingly, Burroughs’ tape recorder experiments were collected on a phonograph album, *Nothing Here Now but the Recordings* (1981), intimating the postbody function of the record.

Compton and De Couto's use of pareidolia in their performance gains additional significance when taken with Compton's foregrounding of the performative function of the body and his conception of schizophonia:

My mixed-race Afro-European body and de Couto's mixed-race Eurasian body both act by cueing, sampling, scratching, and equalising the pre-recorded voice, rather than producing a unified semiotic meaning by direct address (*After 193*).

Compton and De Couto's material manipulations of the pre-recorded voice proliferate multiple semiotic meanings, interrupting and dissonating Burroughs' parasitic pre-recordings entwined in the human flesh, what Hayles imagines as a process of social conditioning (86). Compton's schizophonic performance, with its celebration of 'audio interplay' and the 'pleasure of critical disruptions to natural audition' (199), challenges the pre-recordings, or inscriptions, of the hegemony. Furthermore, Compton tells us '[r]ace is pareidolia: a trick of the eyes, an imposition of the imagination' (184), conflating race with a visual interpellation of human identity, compatible with Ellison's ontologies and grounded in an imaginative reading of the features of the face. It is revealing then that both the face and the borders of nations are signified as visual afterimages in the Dunning sample, linking pareidolia to landscape. This imaginative reading of visual afterimages can also be traced in Hayles' characterisation of reading as 'akin to the interior monologue', connecting pareidolia to the processes of language: identifying patterns in the orthographic and the sonic.

In "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine", Baraka's writing enables the transmission of vibrations between *fin de siècle* Alabama and postwar New Jersey;

the story outlines a temporal and spatial topography of race in America. The sonority of time is expressed through a kinetic modality of vibration between the narrator and his grandfather, Tom Russ, and the characters and places that populate the story — for example, when Tom notes that he ‘[c]an’t hardly walk for all the movement between me and the ground’ (2). Such kinesis can be traced in the operation of the beat in Baldwin’s *Another Country*, in which the sonic spectre of Rufus haunts the novel’s parts and chapters through the revolution of jazz tracks on the body of the phonograph. As the ghost of Rufus echoes throughout the text after his death, there is a process of spatial abjection as the other characters encounter the haunted streets and spaces of New York. The A-train similarly functions as a machine that tears through temporal and spatial boundaries, making a tatter of time and mapping the sonorous body in its thunderous, accelerated journey across the city. Similarly, the phonograph creates thresholds and apertures in its role as vehicle for the transmission of the postbody voice in *Invisible Man*. Ellison’s narrator harnesses the artistry of Louis Armstrong to articulate a sonic understanding of the temporal, compatible with Bachelard’s concept of time as discontinuous, composed of instants and voids. Additionally, the grammaphonic voice enacts a ghostly vibration in the text and imbues African American identities with a ‘time-bending, jazz-shaped invisibility’ (Pinkerton 187). Bambara’s treatment of time, epitomised in her symbolic use of the phonograph and hourglass, posit memory as the confluence of space, time, and the sonorous body; through an appeal to the sensory, the vibrations that reverberate through each of these texts are invested with light and sound, able to break through barriers, limits, even possessing the potential to shatter bone. The power attributed to *visuality and*

aurality in Ellison and Bambara's schemas eradicate traditional hierarchies that privilege vision over sound. In *The Salt Eaters*, music provides a sounding line of interconnection between Velma's liminal, postbody consciousness and the physical space of Claybourne, Georgia, proposing an alternative sonic and kinetic interpellation of African American identity rooted in *place*, in Massey's sense. An examination of Compton's work allows us to extend the postbody poetic from the phonograph to the contemporary, active revolutions of the dub plate, and to extend our analysis beyond the diasporic master narratives for a consideration of overlapping diasporas befitting the multiple, malleable concept of time and space posited in the first half of the chapter.

Schafer's work offers a paradigm for the blending of sonic and geographic landscapes, understanding sound technologies as a severance of the human voice from the body, projecting it into the postbody and allowing its emergence from the landscape itself. Schafer's predictions that this would have implications for human subjectivity were well founded, but not necessarily negative. Compton's exercises in schizophonia reveal the postbody voice as a resource in the rewriting and reconstitution of inherited and oppressive notions of identity and subjectivity: a counter-hegemonic affirmation through acoustic intervention. Dub poetry in Canada acts as a contact zone or blended conceptual space in which to reimagine subject position, and further complicates a phenomenology of presence through the spectre of the ghost in sound. The ghost in the track is a manifestation of the postbody, released from the social, spatial, and temporal boundaries that must be negotiated by the body. The practice of spoken word poetry by artists such as Compton, Evanson, and Joseph emphasises the body in oral and written artistic

performance. In their work, the body becomes an instrument of sonic inscription, and oral and written production is reinvested with bodily frameworks. As the body performs upon and creates the art-object, so too does the art-object inscribe itself upon the body, as seen in Joseph's "Poem for John Coltrane", in which the poet's body is shaped by jazz. Phonographic inscription is represented as a sort of cuneiform, further enmeshing the oral and the written, and underscoring the materiality of the positionable, postbody art-object. Compton's use of the ideogram highlights the kinetic aspects of orthographic representation, reminding us that the written word *performs* sound, whilst the practice of reading can be understood as subvocalisation, elucidating the relationship between the body and the word. Importantly, the interstitial threshold between body and postbody acts as a Legba-like vortex or contact zone in which radical, paratactical experiments of identity can be tried, forging an innovative and formally hybrid space constituted by dub poetry in the Canadian soundscape.

Crossing the Water: Portals, Islands, and Kinesis
in the Black Atlantic Soundscape

In his seminal work *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Paul Gilroy offers a new paradigm for conceptualising the black diaspora, employing the motif of 'ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol' (4). Gilroy's chronotope of the sailing ship roots(routes) black transnational cultural constructions in(through) the experiences of the Middle Passage, and emphasises transnational exchange rather than national boundaries, promoting recognition of the existence of shared and hybrid cultures which transcend them. Brent Hayes Edwards is critical of the Black Atlantic configuration, claiming that 'the fascination with the Atlantic frame... continually draws Gilroy back into the quagmire of origins' ("Uses" 63). However, Gilroy's oceanic framework of identity suggests a useful positioning of the ocean as a liminal space between Africa and diasporic sites in the Western hemisphere. This chapter will analyse incarnations of the threshold in African American and Caribbean literature, examining how they signal 'the temporal and ontological rupture of the middle passage' (Gilroy 222), and offer an alternative interpellation to black inhabitants of the city.

The experience of crossing the water can be traced in cultural constructions such as the spirituals in the African American soundscape and limbo dance in Caribbean musical performance. Each articulates the liminal space of the ocean and the movement of the body through space and time, invoking ancestral memory and reviving kinetic, quasi-material manifestations of the ancestral figure. Spiritual

songs and limbo dancing both memorialise an ancestral past and the trauma of the Middle Passage, and serve as a liberatory practice that, despite the immense dislocation and fragmentation of cultural, social, and familial bonds the Crossing entailed, allows for the survival, re-emergence, and innovation of diasporic cultural forms.

The motion of ships across the Atlantic is but one oceanic framework offered to explain diaspora; Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite's tidalectics suggests a kinetic and cyclical chronotope, providing a panacea for what Edwards regards as the linearity of Gilroy's retreat into the 'quagmire of origins'. Furthermore, Brathwaite's summoning of the tides invests an antiphonal impulse in the spatial and temporal innovations found in diasporic literature; the works examined here further elucidate an antiphonal relationship between the landscape and its inhabitants. Focusing on Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992) and Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), this chapter analyses how the sweeping soundscapes of Morrison's City and Lovelace's Hill delineate the borders and portals of Harlem, New York, and Port of Spain, Trinidad. Both authors remind us that humans inhabit languages as well as landscapes, and this chapter will trace their synaesthetic inscriptions for kinetic, oral, and visual modalities, attending to neglected practices of signification such as 'mimesis, gesture, kinesis and costume', as well as the use of spirituals, jazz, calypso, and carnival (Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* 78).

The engagement of diasporic literature with the experiences of the body as it moves through space and time is a concern rooted in the development of cultural forms during slavery. In *Slave Songs and the Birth of African American Poetry* (2008), Lauri Ramey identifies 'more mystical slippages of bodies, times, and places'

in African American slave songs compared to white Protestant religious hymns (98), which can be traced to contemporary imbrications of the body, the temporal, and the spatial in the examples discussed in chapter two. Additionally, Ramey's diagnosis of the doorway as a 'profoundly resonant objective correlative' which creatively blends image and substance and represents a liminal state (116), in which she positions slave songs, illuminates James Baldwin's depiction of the doorway to Beauford Delaney's apartment in "The Price of the Ticket" (1985). Baldwin's treatment of Delaney's doorway echoes the spirituality of the traditional song "Lord Open the Unusual Door", which Delaney would often sing (Leeming 32). The liminality of the spirituals, 'neither in nor out of accepted spaces of identity, nationality, ownership, production, acceptance, art, poetry, value, originality, meaning, or interpretation' (Ramey 117), aids Baldwin in his portrayal of his initial meeting with Delaney, the artist who introduced him to the blues and jazz, 'allowing the young protégé to understand that these 'secular' sounds were as sacred as the music heard in church' (Field 4). Baldwin invests the meeting with the sonority of spirituals, jazz, and the blues, and emphasises the liminal space of Delaney's Greenwich Village apartment: 'I walked through that door into Beauford's colors... I walked into music' (x). The creatively blended space of the doorway thus allows for the slippage of the body from one time and space to another, a transition that is registered sonically in this example. Baldwin's investment of this transportive power not only in the spirituals, but in the blues and jazz, suggests an evolution of the tenets and uses of slave songs for an alternative interpellation as the body moves through the liminal spaces of the cityscape.

Slave songs often present ‘unusually detailed imagery of transportation and localization (crossing water, flying, train travel) to be taken as instructions on meeting places... and escape routes’ (Ramey 99). While Baldwin’s interest in the spirituals is evidenced by his choice of lyrics from spiritual music as the titles of his work, from *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) to *Just Above My Head* (1979), and his excavation of the resources of the black church, the legacy of this detailed imagery of transportation and localisation can be seen in Rufus’ train journey across the city to the George Washington Bridge in *Another Country* (1962). The coordinates of each train stop are communicated to the reader as Rufus crosses the boundaries between uptown and downtown New York, revealing the racialised composition of the city’s blocks and streets. This focus on transportation and localisation is also apparent in Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*, published thirty years later. As Joe and Violet Trace near the City, their train — the aptly named Southern Sky — must cross the water that surrounds it and trembles at the approach. As the train moves through a tunnel the:

quick darkness... made them wonder if maybe there was a wall ahead to crash into or a cliff hanging over nothing. The train shivered with them at the thought but went on and sure enough there was ground up ahead and the trembling became the dancing under their feet (30).

Morrison explicitly connects transportation with music in this invocation of the train invested with human, empathic kinesis as it transports the migrating families from the rural south to the black metropolis. Indeed, this chapter argues that Morrison’s narrative is an expression of the resource of African American music, not limited to jazz, but incorporating the blues and spirituals, or in Ramey’s term, slave songs.

The following discussion will take a comparative approach to Ramey's text and Morrison's novel, making connections between the distinct genres of jazz as it is employed in Morrison's novel, and the resource of the spirituals, as delineated by Ramey. For example, Ramey's depiction of slave songs as a 'metaphorical freedom train', a 'conceptual space where the slaves were able to build a platform of poetic liberation' from 'the linguistic, physical, religious, intellectual, and cultural constraints of their lives' (123), can be applied to Morrison's complication of Joe and Violet's journey northwards to a space of anticipated "freedom" in the fictional City. In the short extract above, Morrison extends a kinetic conception of citylife, as the train compels the Traces to *dance* at the threshold between states, again invoking the liminal space of the doorway.

Thunder, Slave Songs, and Morrison's "I"

Ramey's work utilises Kwasi Wiredu's concept of quasi-materialism in West African ontologies, Mark Turner's creative blends, Leonard Talmy's "fictive motion", and Pascal Boyer's "ghost physics" to demonstrate how slave songs break 'physical, social, and imaginative barriers, navigating between images of stasis and movement, wholeness and fragmentation of identity, and being alive versus being in spirit' (140). Her analysis stresses how these 'metaphorical domains', which include travel through 'time and space, passing over or through geographical and other material barriers, and breaking free of various laws of physics' (140), exemplified possibility to enslaved people, and fulfilled important functions by allowing a conceptual framework through which the codified, restricted, oppressed,

and controlled lives of slaves could find translation through music into freedom and expression, movement and passage. For example, Talmy's fictive motion refers to examples in slave songs that represent motion where no physical movement could actually occur. Among the examples given by Ramey is the line 'Hear dat mournful thunder / roll from door to door' (141). Here, movement is conceived sonically and in this short line both the liminal doorway and a search for home are invoked, while the 'mournful' rolling thunder is invested with the imagery of transportation. In this way, the slave song can 'create self-determination and action in a state of enforced stasis and absence of freedom' (142), a methodology of psychic escape from the bonds and boundaries of enslavement.

The metaphorical domains manifest in slave songs can be traced to Morrison's jazz narrator. The "I" voice of Morrison's text is able to cross boundaries, effect movement, and communicate with a reader existing beyond the confines of the text in a similar way to Ramey's conception of the slave song, for example when she describes the authors of slave songs as 'easy time travellers' whose travel 'could take place in disembodied form' (142). If we view Morrison's narrator through this lens it is possible to understand how the narrator can offer a vision into the past experiences of other characters, as Ramey explains:

Speakers in these poems seem to be at an earthly starting block, ready to spring up in the air, down into the earth, across water, to heaven, back in history, ahead to freedom, crossing over physical limitations of what it means to be "here" and "now," even what it means to be human (142).

These transgressions of temporal and spatial boundaries in slave songs are whole or partial African survivals. Morrison too foregrounds this part of African American

experience, noting the fragmentation of the 'traditional related cultures' of the African past, the effort of 'trying to hold on to those pieces that you do pass on' which 'might disintegrate and resurface' ("Come" 129). This fragmentation and re-emergence can be understood in terms of African languages, in many of which 'there is an infinite past, and very few, if any, verbs for the future, and a major string of verbs for the continuous present' (130). Morrison's harnessing of 'the notion of its always being now' (130) in African ontologies of time may go toward an understanding of her narrator as an 'easy time traveller', possessing the ability to delve into the histories of her characters, and the immediacy with which her narrator addresses the reader. Morrison's book-narrator also challenges the idea of human embodiment; Morrison herself stresses that the narrator is a talking book: 'The book uses verbs — "I think," "I believe," "I wonder," "I imagine," "I know" — but it never sits down, it never walks, because it's a book' ("Nobel" 95). In doing so, Morrison negates the idea that the narrative voice is in possession of a human body.

If Morrison's narrator enacts Talmy's fictive motion and Boyer's ghost physics in his or her ability to travel across space and time, and subverts visual, spatial, and sonic urban boundaries to report on the inhabitants of Harlem, Wiredu's sense of "quasi-materialism" (*Cultural* 125) is also enacted in the narrator's seemingly disembodied state, as when s/he tells us 'I haven't got any muscles, so I can't really be expected to defend myself' (8). John Duvall discusses this sense of disembodiment in terms of the 'profoundly metafictional orientation' of the novel: '[a]lmost from the outset the novel poses as its hermeneutic problem the identity of its disembodied narrator' (132). Duvall borrows from Eusebio

Rodrigues' "Experiencing Jazz" (1993) to address the issue of who is speaking, suggesting that Morrison's choice of epigraph can illuminate the narrator's identity; from the gnostic text *The Nag Hammadi*, Morrison's epigraph is vocalised by the goddess Thunder, prompting Rodrigues to characterise the narrator as a 'female immanence of the divine' (749). Morrison's epigraph, emerging as it does from the poem "Thunder, Perfect Mind", a paradoxical monologue on identity, also dovetails with Ramey's exemplary slave song which depicts a thunder invested with Talmy's fictive motion, able to move from door to door, and in the case of Morrison's narrator, peer into, listen at, or even move through, the portals of the cityscape. In the last pages of the novel, the narrator concludes that s/he should '[a]void the window; leave the hole I cut through the door to get in lives instead of having one of my own' (221) — suggesting that the doors were closed to him/her. Additionally, the idea of Morrison's narrator as *mind* opens up an interesting avenue into the narrator's construction as disembodied; Wiredu's 'non-substance conception of mind' views mind as 'processes of the brain — that is, "a capacity" rather than an object', suggesting that the material body is able to transform into something quasi-material (Ramey 145).¹ Therefore we can interpret Morrison's narrator as a capacity, a process, a talking book or a jazz performance, a disembodied voice riffing on the operations of citylife.

Morrison's "I" can also be said to inhabit Turner's spatial construct, the creative blend, when read in conjunction with Wiredu's treatise on African ontologies. Turner writes of the soul's ability to travel and exist separately from the body: 'human beings... create blends in which the intentional agent that causes the body to move is something inside us that is separate from the body: the soul'; an

illustrative example is the dream state, when ‘we have perceptions that do not fit our surroundings... we are someplace other than the place in which our body is located’ (“Ghost” 19, 21). This is important for slave songs because, as Ramey asserts, in this blended space ‘slave poets could be anywhere. They could interact with ghosts, angels, spirits, biblical figures, ancestors, or God. They could be free’ (147). This ability has implications for Morrison’s discursive space as a creative blend. At the novel’s close, there is a curious episode in which the narrator embraces the seemingly absent character, Wild: ‘She has seen me and is not afraid of me. She hugs me. Understands me. Has given me her hand. I am touched by her. Released in secret’ (221). Duvall argues that this embrace, which crosses all temporal and spatial boundaries as ‘in terms of realistic representation... Wild would be long dead’, could posit Wild as ‘the ancestor of Thunder’, and articulates the ‘logic of *Jazz*: the character of the story who is body but not voice (Wild) completes the chief character of the discourse (the narrator) who is voice without body’ (135). The “ghost physics” of the narrator’s union with Wild should also be noted, in which ‘ghosts obey all the usual causal expectations for physical entities, except a few strange exceptions’ (Turner, “Ghost” 29).² Ramey reminds us that in slave songs, the locative would often describe what was missing, absent, out of reach, or disappeared, expressing a ‘sense of incomplete physicality’ in which ‘[h]uman materiality is... profoundly partial or qualified’, an almost-inversion of ghost physics in which the ‘speaker’s status seems transitional, as if in the process of dissolving into an ancestral spirit’ (144). In a novel populated by absent, out of reach, or dead mothers (of Dorcas, Violet, and Joe), Wild best exemplifies this sense of dissolution and ghostliness. It is Wild who Joe is seeking, or hunting, when he

shoots Dorcas. Furthermore, in the embrace between the narrator and Wild it is as though they are dissolving into each other — the narrator is ‘released’ by Wild, intimating liberation, and as Duvall argues, their functions complete each other, body and voice: Wild (as ancestor of Thunder) sees, understands, and touches the disembodied narrator, giving her her hand. These boundary-crossing, seemingly supernatural elements of slave songs fuse in the characterisation of Morrison’s narrator and his/her interactions with the novel’s characters and locations.

Ramey tells us that the ‘power to cross boundaries in slave songs derives from particular conceptions of the relationships among body, mind, and spirit’, where the ‘Cartesian dualism’ between mind and body does not exist (144), and this can also be traced in the embrace between Wild and Morrison’s “I”. In the spirituals, biblical texts act as one of the pivots by which ‘temporal and spatial boundaries are made to dissolve’, for example in the lyric ‘Steal away to Jesus’ (Ramey 144). Beyond its practical function as a code to enable communication between escaping slaves, these allusions fashion music as a sanctified space, in which a persecuted community can express themselves, and support, bless, and even liberate, one another. In Morrison’s text the central pivot is the music, those secular sounds which, as Baldwin discovered, could be as sacred as those heard in church. The operation of music as the conduit by which temporal and spatial boundaries are made to dissolve can be seen in the structure of the novel itself. Morrison’s chapter breaks in *Jazz* mimic the repetition and rupture of the musical form; the narrator continues to speak to the reader conversationally, but may break into reverie about past events or relate something as if as an aside. For example, the (unnumbered) fifth chapter ends with Joe’s voice stating ‘And let me tell you,

baby, in those days it was more than a state of mind', referencing his apprenticeship to the 'Hunter's hunter' Henry Lestory, and the sixth chapter picks up with the narrator's voice remarking, 'Risky I'd say, trying to figure out anybody's state of mind' (137), describing itself as 'curious, inventive, and well-informed' before travelling to Violet's girlhood in Vesper County, an improvisatory folding of time and space. This returns us to Wiredu's understanding of mind as a capacity, and the narrative as a talking book or jazz performance. In these examples Morrison also overtly complicates the concept of mind, as Joe references his history of hunting in the woods, a history that in a later chapter will be dangerously, riskily blended with the narration of his movements through the city as he stalks Dorcas.

The key elements of Morrison's tale develop the thematic schemas of blues music: scorned lovers, betrayal, and revenge. However, Morrison's polyvocal, interwoven narrative departs from 'the single-voiced blues lyrics' (Edwards, *Practice* 62), despite articulating (and knowing) a masculine blues identity:

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.
 The singer is hard to miss, sitting as he does on a fruit crate in the center of the sidewalk (119).

Here, Morrison evokes the language and rhythms of the blues in her descriptions of citylife on the streets of Harlem, using lyric form before returning to the narrator's voice in the final quoted line. Weaving bluesy refrains into the narrative, Morrison taps into a tradition of greats such as Louis Armstrong's "What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?" (and by association, Ralph Ellison's Harlem novel *Invisible Man*

(1952)), and a linguistic register that expresses feelings of aloneness, separateness, and invisibility (where did she go?), and of community, visibility, and surveillance (everybody knows your name). Bluesmen and women are placed at the centre of Morrison's tale and her setting of 1920s Harlem, represented by the singer who is 'hard to miss... in the center of the sidewalk'. Morrison's novel suggests that human experience cannot be reduced to a linear understanding — hence her employment of the simultaneity of jazz, able to express loneliness and belonging concurrently, to be 'So-lonesome-I-could-die' even though 'Everybody knows your name'. Alan Rice suggests that the narrative logic of the novel is antiphonal, and 'leads to a seamlessness that recalls the best of jazz performance', as it is the practice of jazz performers to 'pick up on the musical traces of the previous soloist as they launch into their own definition of a piece, so creating communal work out of individual memory' (135). The narrative of *Jazz* weaves together individual memories, as Morrison's "I" picks up the Traces in Virginia and explicitly connects them with the 'million more' who migrate to the city (32). This shared antiphonal impulse of the spirituals and jazz enables their practitioners to offer moral and social sanction to one other; further, their solo performances allow for a space of self-definition within this communally sanctified space. Morrison's text emulates this function in its polyphonic, mosaic-like composition.

We can broaden this sense of music as a communally sanctified space if we consider the construction of slave songs as *cumulative*; any idea of a slave song as fixed is 'in contradiction to their lineage and new identity' (Ramey 108). This characteristic is shared by Morrison's narrator, who at times appears to rewrite the text as the novel develops; ostensibly, and as Duvall notes, the 'first four pages of

Jazz give a version of the complete story' (134). At the conclusion of these four pages, the narrator speculates about the nature of Felice's relationship with Violet and Joe, triangulating them in a 'scandalizing threesome' (6). However, by the end of the novel, the narrator admits:

I saw the three of them... and they looked to me like a mirror image of Dorcas, Joe and Violet... It never occurred to me that they were thinking other thoughts, feeling other feelings, putting their lives together in ways I never dreamed of (221).

This admission suggests a distrust of the *solely* visual, as the deceptive mirror image (an inverted reflection) is displaced by the multiplicity of thoughts and feelings experienced by Felice, Violet, and Joe, whose capacity of 'putting their lives together' echoes both the polyphonic structure of the novel and the 'unanticipated things [that] can happen' during jazz performance (Morrison, "Come" 126). The narrative structure of Morrison's text accords with Ramey's observation about the limitations of 'textual representations of slave songs', which must be understood not as fixed but as 'versions, palimpsests, singular echoes, ghostly twins — they are not written documents in the Western poetic sense' (106). Indeed, the "wandering" choruses and "mosaic" composition of slave songs would have 'strong metaphorical resonance for a diasporic population, suggesting both migration and synthesis' (Ramey 107).³ These features, along with an overlapping antiphonal arrangement 'where all parts intersect one another' (Ramey 114), can be traced in the narrative structure of Morrison's text. For example, Joe, Violet, Dorcas, and Alice Manfred all voice sections of the text in direct address, weaving a polyphonic narrative so that '[n]o one voice is the correct one, the dominant one, the one that

has all of the truth, including the narrator, or especially the narrator' (Morrison, "Come" 126). In such ways, Morrison employs a 'postmodern poetics that blurs the boundaries between the mimetic — the world the novel represents — and the diegetic — the telling of the story' (Duvall 135). Through the repetition — or reinscription — of parts of the story from the point of view of different characters within the novel, Morrison traces and retraces the narrative; as Philip Page asserts, to 'trace is to copy, to double, and thus avoid the death-like closure of completion, thereby allowing for... endless versions of the text' (174). Furthermore, since to trace is also to inscribe, to 'make physical marks on a blank surface... author, narrator, characters, and reader are theoretically fused' in Morrison's polyvocal opus (174).

The Derridean metaphor of the trace surfaces throughout the narrative in the Traces and tracks that populate it: tracks that guide hunters, trains, and phonographs. All three are imbricated as Joe Trace is:

bound to the track. It pulls him like a needle through the groove of a Bluebird record. Round and round about the town. That's the way the City spins you (120).

The narrator insinuates that Joe is compelled to stalk his young lover, referencing both his search for Dorcas through the City, which 'does not object or interfere' (180), and record grooves which seemingly propel Joe's fateful actions in the extract above. Railway tracks like those that dance the Traces into the City are also hinted at in this allusion to his crime, implicating the unresolved traumas of, and a psychic break with, Joe's past. However, the narrator's address to the reader at the novel's close, the invitation to '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), recants this sense of inevitability, and is redolent of Derrida's blending of the tactile, orality, and inscription when he refers to 'a written text that keeps watch over my discourse... toward which I necessarily will attempt to direct your hands and your eyes' (*Margins* 4). This further fuses the functions of author, narrator, character, and reader, by not only suggesting that a relationship between reader and narrator exists, but dissolving the 'absolute distinction' between them (Page 174), challenging traditional ontologies of being and presence.

Page suggests that the significance of traces, cracks, and wells in *Jazz* point to the play between presence and absence in the text, especially for those characters with absent mothers and fathers. Page applies the Derridean concepts of *différance*, the trace, and the breach to assess Morrison's multi-dimensional usage of the gap and fissure in her text, whether these indicate the cracks in the City sidewalks, the crevice through which Joe enters Wild's sanctuary, or mental collapse, as when Rose Dear is tipped from her chair during the eviction of her family and simply stares at the floor and the cup she is holding (164). Morrison links this fragmentation of identity very clearly with an urban subjectivity, or with an encounter with the urban subjectivity for the migrant, when she conflates Violet's 'private cracks' with the topography of the City, where daylight does not curve against a solid foundation, but bleeds into 'alleyways, crevices one steps across all the time', while the light itself is imperfect and 'shows seams, ill-glued cracks and weak places beyond which is anything'; when Violet sits in the street it is because, not paying attention to the City, she 'stumbles onto these cracks' (23). Furthermore, Rice highlights Morrison's characterisation of Violet's double-self

through a recurring jazz riff on ‘the notion of ‘cracks’, which are dark fissures in ‘the globe light of [her] day’ (137). This doubleness is conceived in the novel in an imbricated visual, sonic, and kinetic modality: the doubleness of Morrison’s light and shade city spaces seep into the lives of her city characters. Malvonne’s nephew, for example, is named Sweetness and behaves accordingly, ‘[i]n the daytime, anyway’, while at night he becomes Little Caesar and engages in criminality (41). Joe has ‘double eyes. Each one a different color. A sad one that lets you look inside him, and a clear one that looks inside you’ (206). Morrison’s reiterative doubling is an inscription of otherness: Violet/Violent’s double-self, ‘that other Violet’ who causes her to carry away infants, attack corpses, and sit down in the street, problematises the idea of a sovereign self, or a unified sense of identity (89). Morrison’s use of doubling rests on this riffing, and is reminiscent of Fran Tonkiss’ insistence that the city has a double life, that ‘the way [cities] slide between the material and the perceptual, the hard and the soft — is spoken out loud, made audible’ (303). This slippage between material, perceptual, hard, and soft is exemplified in Morrison’s description of a Harlem woman sitting on the steps in the street, and a man, who reacts:

to her posture, to soft skin on stone, the weight of the building stressing the delicate, dangling shoe... he’d think it was the woman he wanted, and not some combination of curved stone, and a swinging, high-heeled shoe moving in and out of sunlight (34).

Here, the ‘trick of shapes and light and movement’ produced by the urban environment architects desire in the city (34). Doubleness is inscribed into the socio-spatial dialectic of citylife, the light and shade of its spaces influencing

identities and shaping urban relations. Additionally, Morrison goes on to note that the urban scene makes the man forget ‘little pebbly creeks and apple trees’, while the ‘stars [are] made irrelevant by the light of thrilling, wasteful street lamps’ (34), suggesting that the inhabitants of the city are disconnected from their rural histories. Morrison’s emphasis on cracks and fissures in the cityscape as well as in the migrant psyche often signals a narrative shift into the rural past of her characters, enabling movement across spatial and temporal boundaries through signature portals carved into the text.

The embrace between the narrator and Wild crosses temporal and spatial boundaries, exerting Boyer’s ghost physics, and Duvall reminds us that a ‘further limit is imaginatively transgressed... [when] the embrace occurs between the narrator, the character that figures the author function, and the reader’ (135). At the close of the novel, the narrator addresses the reader:

I love the way you hold me, how close you let me be to you. I like your fingers on and on, lifting, turning. I have watched your face for a long time now, and missed your eyes when you went away from me. Talking to you and hearing you answer — that’s the kick (229).

Morrison draws the reader into the antiphonal logic of the text here, enlarging its dialogic perspective. The (non-human) physicality of the narrator is emphasised, rendering the narrator as a talking book, further blurring the boundary between the mimetic and the diegetic. The presence of the reader in the text can also be explained by the demands of jazz if we consider Morrison’s commentary on jazz performance: ‘in improvising on the spot in front of an audience, you find yourself in a place you could not possibly predict’ (“Nobel” 94). Here Morrison implicitly

imparts the value of the audience/reader to the story, and their role in the performers' journey to an unpredictable place, highlighting both the spatiality of jazz and the influence of each voice and listener on the destination of the performance: like the book, it is in their hands, they can, to paraphrase the novel, make and remake it (229). Indeed, Morrison references the transportive, communicative power of the spirituals within *Jazz* itself, but places their sounds squarely outside the confines of the City, in Joe and Violet's pastoral history. After a day working in the fields of Virginia, Violet returns to their 'little shotgun house', where the relentless heat is 'insinuating. Like the voices of the women in houses nearby singing "Go down, go down, way down in Egypt land..." Answering each other from yard to yard with a verse or its variation' (226). The voices of the women in this antiphonal communion make and remake the hymnal rhythms, taking them on a metaphorical journey to an imagined point of arrival, again creating a sanctified space that moves from yard to yard. This musical communication between women is obscured in the city, but recovered to Violet through her unlikely relationship with Alice, the aunt of the girl she attempts to disfigure in death.

Communion between women is a concern of Morrison's in evidence throughout her body of work, particularly in the novel *Sula* (1973). However, it is in *Beloved* (1987) that Morrison offers the most imbricated representation of the root and power of this communion in the female experience of slavery. In Morrison's extraordinary chapter vocalised by Beloved, the narrative location drags us from the grave, to the womb, to the slaveship. Here Beloved represents the history of black women of the diaspora, and suggests Ramey's mobile figure of the ancestor

as she tells us ‘we are all trying to leave our bodies behind... it is hard to make yourself die forever’ (210). The aural dimension of this history is underscored by a conversation between Nikki Giovanni and Claudia Tate, discussed in Emily Lordi’s *Black Resonance* (2013). In this conversation, Giovanni asks Tate: “Can you imagine what a slave ship must have sounded like?” In a sonic alternative to the oceanic framework offered by Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*, Giovanni at once invests the received narrative of the Middle Passage with the evocative auralities of the gospel hum and affirms a distinctly female experience of transatlantic slavery: ‘what you’re hearing in our music is nothing but the sound of a woman calling another woman’ (qtd. in Lordi 206-207). Giovanni exhorts us to:

Imagine what a slave ship must have sounded like to a woman. The humming must have been deafening. It had to be there... The men didn’t bring it over. I’m not knocking the men. They brought the drums for sure. But they didn’t bring the hum... We women were the ones in the fields in Africa... Black men were out hunting in Africa, but in America they were in the fields with the women. [That’s where] they learned the [hum,] from [the women] (qtd. in Lordi 206).

In a move that further develops Gilroy’s chronotope of ships in motion across the Atlantic to articulate his cultural paradigm, Giovanni invites us to listen to the interior of the slaveship, to trace its people through its sounds, and specifically the voices of women, the deafening hum travelling across the ocean.

Invoking the Ancestor: Aural Memorial and the Kinetic City

Giovanni’s foregrounding of the legacies of the interior sounds of the slaveship in the sonorities of women of the African diaspora helps us to understand Morrison’s

depiction of a kinetically-invested and sonically conceived female ancestor. It is possible to view the metamorphosis of this ancestral figure as a woman calling to another woman if we consider Morrison's utilisation of black musics, which inflects her literary canon. For example, Morrison situates two of the texts from her historical trilogy⁴ in terms of the development of black music in the United States, noting that *Beloved* 'had a kind of classical, spiritual gospel feel, a largeness about it', whilst for *Jazz*, she sought 'that feeling of dislocation and inventiveness and startling change' representative of the Great Migration and traceable in black music of the twentieth century ("Come" 127). The intertextual nods to *Beloved* contained in *Jazz* positions the music as a pivot or gateway for the movement of the ancestor across narratives: Morrison casts Wild as 'a kind of Beloved. The dates are the same. You see a pregnant black woman naked at the end of *Beloved*' ("Nobel" 96), suggesting that this pregnant woman could be the same "Wild" woman Golden Gray encounters in the woods. Like Beloved, who is invested with a quasi-material corporeality, Golden Gray is 'certain that what he is running from is not a real woman but a "vision"' in Wild; when he carries her unconscious body, she is 'an armful of black, liquid female' (*Jazz* 144, 145). This quasi-materiality suggests that Wild and Beloved operate as ancestral figures in the texts, calling to each other across the pages in a blending of orality and orthographic inscription; they are unbound by the usual physical (and narrative) conventions, returning us to Boyer's ghost physics and Beloved's admission that 'we are all trying to leave our bodies behind... it is hard to make yourself die forever' (210). Jazz is a process of metamorphosis in this conception, allowing for the movement and metaphorical rebirth of the symbolic female ancestor throughout space and time. Additionally,

Jazz opens not with a word but with the sound “Sth”, which signifies both Sethe, the protagonist of *Beloved*, and the novel’s epigraph: ‘I am the name of the sound / and the sound of the name / I am the sign of the letter / and the designation of the division’. Whilst the epigraph ‘juxtaposes orality and inscription’ in its invocation of opposites, Morrison’s preverbal sound references her wider project and ‘implants a sense of orality’, foregrounding the oral in the very first orthographic inscriptions of the novel (Page 175-176). Anna Kérchy writes that this choice of epigraph suggests that the text is ‘exploded from within via a thunderlike,⁵ sensual, female voice — perhaps that of a goddess, a dead girl, a jazz disease, or a mother’ (49). Furthermore, Morrison’s description of Wild as an armful of pregnant, black, liquid female conjures the announcement of *Beloved*’s arrival in Morrison’s 1987 text, when ‘[a] fully dressed woman walked out of the water’, unable to lift her head, her ‘new skin, lineless and smooth’ (50). Sethe’s first glimpse of *Beloved* induces a phantom birthing as her ‘bladder filled to capacity... [and] the water she voided was endless... like flooding the boat when Denver was born’ but ‘there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now’ (51). These multiple references to *Beloved*’s rebirth and the passing of, through, and over water (Denver is born during Sethe’s escape from slavery), underline this sense of a metaphorical rebirth of the symbolic female ancestor throughout space and time.

The reading of music as a temporal threshold would align with Rice’s argument that jazz affords a ‘crucial aural memorial to a Southern history which is in danger of being forgotten in the brash new urban spaces of the Northern cities’

(137-138). Morrison's jazz narrative is attended by reminders of the music's rootedness in black vernacular culture and its route through Southern geographies:

when she portrays musicians jamming on the rooftops she is at pains to emphasise the rural origins of the tune... For her the jazz is made by a transplanted people whose bridge to a defining past is as important as their present sorrows (Rice 137).

Thus jazz aids the alienated city-dweller in creating a usable identity while remembering a Southern past. The consequences of forgetting the past are intimated by Joe's breakdown; he is unable to remember an important lesson from his Southern mentor, a lesson that 'would help him to navigate the urban landscape' (Griffin 186). Nor can he recapture the feelings he once shared with Violet when they met under a walnut tree in Virginia — his memories before the city are devoid of emotion, he is unable to 'catch what it felt like' and struggles with the loss until he meets Dorcas (29). This implies an emotional dissociation as Joe's connections to his rural past are overwhelmed by the desires and demands of the cityscape.

Giovanni's observation about the sonic fabric of the Middle Passage and Rice's positing of jazz as aural memorial for Southern history allow us to envision the crossing of the water into the city as another kind of rebirth. In the following extract, the train operates as a portal to the island of Manhattan where the Traces must make their new home in the City:

entering the lip of the City dancing all the way. Her hip bones rubbed his thigh as they stood in the aisle unable to stop smiling. They weren't even there yet and already the City was speaking to them. They were dancing. And like a million others, chests pounding, tracks controlling their feet, they stared out the windows for first sight of the City that danced with them,

proving already how much it loved them. Like a million more they could hardly wait to get there and love it back (32).

There is a kinetic interpellation as the Traces physically enter the 'lip of the City', crossing a threshold in which the city itself is granted embodiment and the bodies in the space of the train carriage are emphasised for their physical closeness, like Rufus' journey in *Another Country*. This signifies an interpellation of the body that is not solely visual (they stare in anticipation of their first sight of the city), nor primarily sonic (the City speaks to them), but enabled also through a modality of movement. Joe and Violet are positioned through a tactile interpellation, as they are 'unable to stop smiling' and the 'tracks [are] controlling their feet'. Their journey vibrates with corporeality and synaesthesia, as Violet's hip bones rub Joe's thigh and they dance along the tracks, the body implicated as a kind of musical instrument — their chests pound, syncopating the space of the train carriage like drums. The City speaks to them, dances with them, and loves them, including them in a black community, the 'million more' that, despite the continued threat of racial violence, can offer protection, group identification, and a sense of belonging through aurality, kinesis, and visuality: 'they stayed to *look at* their number, *hear themselves* in an audience, *feel themselves moving* down the street' (32, emphasis added). However, the City limits do not just demarcate the boundaries of the urban space, a boundary marked by the water that surrounds the City and that causes the Southern Sky to tremble as it crosses, 'like them: nervous at having gotten there at last, but terrified of what was on the other side' (31) but also apply to the movements and freedoms of black Harlemites.

This racially-proscribed limitation can be seen in the lessons Alice teaches Dorcas for moving around city-space, encouraging her 'to crawl along the walls of buildings, disappear into doorways, cut across corners in choked traffic' and 'move anywhere to avoid a whiteboy over the age of eleven' (55). However, in her depiction of the July 1917 protest march known as the Silent Parade, organised by W.E.B. Du Bois and the NAACP (which Dorcas imagines as a funeral march for the parents she lost in the East St. Louis riots), Morrison implies that the occupants of Harlem are able to project into and change contested city spaces, as the marchers advance 'slowly into the space the drums were building for them' (53). The drums, 'saying what the graceful women and the marching men could not' (53), carry forward the message as well as creating space for the marchers to step and move into, investing the drums with a kinetic, sonic, and visual power, as 'what they had seen with their own eyes and through the eyes of others the drums described to a T' (54). This synaesthetic representation of the drums projecting into and altering the space of Fifth Avenue gains additional significance if we consider Tonkiss' notion of urban architecture as part of modern auditory technology. Tonkiss suggests that cities act as a 'soundstage' in which architecture and design shape the urban experience and 'marshal and discipline sound in space' carving out 'acoustic order from the discordant rhythms of the city' (304). In Morrison's text, however, there is seepage between the extent to which architecture disciplines sound and the body, and the extent to which bodies architect the city.

This seepage between city design and human architecture is evidenced in Morrison's synaesthetic portrayal of the relationships between her characters and

city space. The first depictions we receive of Morrison's Harlem in 1926 offer a Baldwinian description of the urban scene:

Daylight slants like a razor cutting the buildings in half. In the top half I see looking faces and it's not easy to tell which are people, which the work of stonemasons. Below is shade where any blasé thing takes place: clarinets and lovemaking, fists and the voices of sorrowful women... Hep. It's the bright steel rocking above the shade below that does it (7).

As in the Harlem Baldwin crafts in *Another Country*, Morrison employs a dynamic use of light that exposes the planes and perspectives of the urban landscape.

Tonkiss utilises this extract as an epigraph to an essay that does not overtly discuss Morrison's novel, but the 'exemplary urban attitude Simmel describes as 'blasé'' (304). The blasé posture adopted by urbanites is posited as a reaction to an overstimulation of the senses through the cacophony of citylife, against which 'the blasé posture inures the metropolitan to the hectic ambience' of the urban scene (Tonkiss 304). The noisy nature of the City is emphasised by the narrator, who, until the novel's denouement, believes they can articulate 'its loud voice and make that voice sound human' (220). Rice underscores the way in which Morrison's text emulates the 'noisy nature of the city experience itself' (135), as in the following extract:

The City is smart at this: smelling good and looking raunchy; sending secret messages designed as public signs: this way, open here, danger to let colored only single men on sale woman wanted private room stop dog on premises absolutely no money down fresh chicken free delivery fast (64).

In this example, Morrison offers a creative blend in which the city speaks to its inhabitants, directing their movements through coded messages; it also expresses

the needs and demands of its citizens, the city '[c]overing your moans with its own' (64). Here, Morrison's description blends the oralities of the human voice with the inscriptions of street signage, suggesting a reciprocal relationship between the urban body and the urban text.

Additionally, the *blasé posture*, indicative of stature or an arrangement of limbs, becomes a hallmark of citylife in Simmel's thesis, shaping the urban experience through human physicality. The faces adorning Morrison's urban architecture mirror Baldwin's description of Lenox Avenue, where 'the faces, even those of the children, held a sweet or poisonous disenchantment which made their faces extraordinarily definite, as though they had been struck out of stone' (AC 100). Morrison continues to blend blues notes with her narrative voice, such as the inclusion of the sound "hep" and the archetypes of 'clarinets and lovemaking, fists and the voices of sorrowful women', in which both clarinets and fists are the instruments of men. Morrison describes a kinetic, dancing city — even the steel 'rocks' — in which the human residents' actions are antiphonal to their architectural environment:

A colored man floats down out of the sky blowing a saxophone, and below him, in the space between two buildings, a girl talks earnestly to a man in a straw hat... The man puts his hand on the stone wall above her head... The sun sneaks into the alley behind them. It makes a pretty picture on its way down (8).

Here the kissing couple are framed by the city, and the man's hands touch the stone wall rather than the woman's body, drawing the city into their clinch.

Although the framing suggests the visual, or even the photographic, with the sun making 'a pretty picture' behind the couple, there are also cues to the sonic

environment in the floating saxophone sounds, and an emphasis on the coordination of the two bodies in urban space.⁶ Morrison offers a changing-same reiteration of their location in the alleyway, under sky, hands, saxophone, and sun, between alley, wall, and buildings. In “The Changing Same” (1966), Amiri Baraka identifies New Black Music as the ‘direct expression of a place’, able to transport the audience to a ‘place where Black People live’ (*Black* 205, 213). Thus Baraka identifies jazz as a physical space that can be entered and inhabited, ‘not unlike the uniquely black space’ of Morrison’s City (Omry 26). Nathaniel Mackey explains that the changing same exemplifies a ‘black position, one of alienation and resistance... [which] becomes a kind of “unmoved mover” at the root of black America’s transformations’ (*Discrepant* 26), quoting from Baraka’s *Blues People* (1963): ‘The Negro’s music changed as he changed, reflecting shifting attitudes or... *consistent attitudes within changed contexts*’ (153). In Morrison’s image schema, the attitudes of the kissing couple represent the urban body framed by the changing context of the cityscape. While the free-form description of the City’s signal inscriptions quoted above is suggestive of Turner’s directionality, discussed in chapter one, Morrison’s spatialising of jazz implicates the City in the image schema of the kissing couple, suggesting a reciprocal, desirous relationship between them. Morrison’s Harlemites occupy an embodied agency that defies an ‘animate agency’ concretised in the urban environment that would render them as ‘causal objects’ (Turner, *Literary* 22). This embodied agency is recognised at the novel’s conclusion by Morrison’s voyeuristic “I”, the talking book that strives to articulate the City and its inhabitants before finally conceding: ‘[o]ut of the corners of their eyes they watched me [...] they danced and walked all over me’ (220), conveying a kinetic,

human instrumentality in the dynamics of citylife. As Baraka 'envisages a new space, created through music, in which African Americans can learn to know themselves' (Omry 26), Morrison's urban dwellers subvert, return, and trample the animate agency of the City, forging portals and spaces for self-definition beyond the scrutiny of its gaze.

In the discursive space of *Jazz*, music is the pivot or portal by which temporal and spatial boundaries are made to dissolve, enabling the movement of the quasi-material ancestral figure through space and time. Morrison's polyvocal opus offers a palimpsestic narrative structure further suggestive of the processes of migration and synthesis. This overcoming of physical, social, and imaginative barriers enacts a methodology of psychic escape from the terrors of slavery and racial persecution. These creative blends subvert the animate agency of the City as a structure of containment and surveillance: the antiphonal relationship between body and landscape enables the body to architect the city, as seen in the *Silent Parade*. The rupture and dislocation of the Middle Passage is invoked in the experience of crossing the water into the city on the island of Manhattan, as the *Traces* experience a rebirth that interpellates them in a kinetic relation to the urban landscape. Such kinetic interpellation engenders possibilities for a renewed relationship to the landscape by emphasising the agency of the body, as seen in the following reading of limbo dancing in Caribbean literature. Furthermore, Brathwaite's understanding of the oral tradition as 'part of a total kinesis' (*ConVERSations* 224) synaesthetically imbricates modalities, and this multimodality informs an examination of Earl Lovelace's rendering of carnival in his *Port of Spain* novel. The rest of the chapter attends to the projection of carnival into city space

and the synaesthesia inherent in “masking”, the composition of the titular dragon comparable to a poetic collage or musical arrangement. It will demonstrate how, like jazz, calypso invests the urban topography with the antiphonal impulse of the oral tradition. Derek Walcott’s depiction of the polyglot, multiply-inscribed Port of Spain is harnessed to discuss the incoherencies of the fragmented island topography, incoherencies carnivalised by Lovelace in *The Dragon Can’t Dance*. More broadly, engaging with Walcott allows for a comparison between poetic composition, the latticework of Lovelace’s dragon, and the fabric of Calvary Hill, ‘its guts stretched to bursting with a thousand narrow streets and alleys and lanes and traces and holes’ (1-2). This articulation of the gap, the fusion of “little pieces” to create wholeness, intimates diasporic dislocation *and* connectedness through the translations and transmissions of Black Atlantic sounds.

Antiphon Islands: Carnival Codes and the Limbo Gateway

Kamau Brathwaite’s pioneering work navigates and manoeuvres sonic structures of modernist poetry and Black Atlantic sounds to seek a synthesis of ‘folk orature, blues, spirituals, jazz, ska, calypso, reggae, and African and Caribbean drumming’ (Collins 185). Through his poetic practice and critical work, Brathwaite writes ‘the trauma of the Caribbean’ into history, and foregrounds, in the transnational transmissions of the Black Atlantic soundscape, ‘the strength of a culture that sustained itself through subversive sounds’ (Collins 185). As part of this foregrounding of subversive sounds, Brathwaite distinguishes between dialect and nation language in the Caribbean creole continuum, proposing a spectrum in which

dialect equals a distortion of tongues by a history of colonial rule and subjugation, whilst nation language 'is the submerged area of that dialect which is much more closely allied to the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean' (*History* 13). Brathwaite favours a politicised employment of nation language, which is 'like a howl or a shout or a machine gun or the wind or a wave. It is also like the blues... English and African at the same time' (13). This imagery fuses environmental symbols of irrepressible momentum and human symbols of protest to advance a rumbling articulation which is also a culturally hybrid sonic space. Equally, Brathwaite's sonic register privileges aurality in the construction of a national literature, arguing that musical structures offer 'the surest threshold' to language (*History* 16). In "Jazz and the West Indian Novel, I, II and II", written between 1967 and 1969, Brathwaite further suggests that the literary elements in the Trinidadian calypso and in Jamaican ska indicate a correspondence between African American jazz and West Indian cultural forms; both founded in African inheritances, each is also built 'on a superstructure of Euro-American language, attitudes, and techniques. Jazz, for instance, is played in an Africanized manner on European instruments' (337). Brathwaite finds correspondences too in the development of jazz and calypso as the work of emancipated individuals, arguing that while the blues is the 'artistic expression of... [the] slave and his descendants under the geographical and social conditions of the American South', jazz is emancipated music, signified in its 'brash brass colouring, the bravado, its parade of syncopation, its emphasis on improvisation, its *swing*' (336). He also writes that it is 'the music of the freed man' who has 'moved into the complex, high-life town' (336), recognising the influence of the urban environment.

The power of jazz resounds in the symbiosis of individual and communal qualities, its ability to simultaneously project the ‘cry from the heart of the hurt man, the lonely one’ in the saxophone and trumpet, and a ‘collective blare of protest and its affirmation of the life and rhythm of the group’ (“Jazz” 336). But Brathwaite denigrates calypso and ska in his comparison with the simultaneity of jazz here, suggesting that they ‘are concerned with protest only incidentally’, that West Indian music ridicules individualism, celebrates conformity, and is ‘basically a music for dancing: a communal, almost tribal form’ (336). Additionally, this configuration neglects the importance of the Caribbean landscape and its relationship to auditory culture in the production of nation language by privileging blues and jazz and the geographical and social conditions that produced them. As in the above reading of Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*, the work of this chapter suggests that dance holds a revolutionary potential signalled by the individual cry, collective blare of protest, and affirmation of life Brathwaite traces in jazz; that in kinesis can also be found the revolutionary potential of the body: for movement, for subversion, for articulation, and for transformation, and (as dance syncopates space) that this kinesis has implications for establishing a new, or renewed, relationship to the landscape, one that allows for cultural metamorphosis.

Despite his early characterisation of West Indian music as less politically or subversively charged than jazz, ‘*basically* a music for dancing’ (336, emphasis added), Brathwaite’s later work clearly acknowledges the revolutionary power of a kinetic affinity between sound and body. In a public conversation with Mackey,⁷ Brathwaite conceives of the oral tradition as synaesthetic, interdisciplinary, and ‘*transboundary*’ (*ConVERSations* 211, original emphasis). Brathwaite stresses that

‘[w]hat we have to remember — get to know — about the ‘Oral Tradition,’ is that it’s never only *heard*, it’s *seen* — is part of a total kinesis, right?’ (224). Brathwaite intimates a growing synaesthesia in spoken word poetry in light of sound/print reproduction technologies: while, ‘the ancestors, the griots, had to commit it all to memory’, performing ‘with breath and memory alone’, the modern ‘world of *electronic(s)*’ allows for a hybridisation of ‘the two ‘traditions’ into sound/visual; to convert script into sound’ (216). Brathwaite uses the example of the contemporary calypsonian, who:

composes a musical or scripturesqu(e) surprising SCORE. Designed to be enacted — to come alive — off that ‘page’ — within a BREATHING *houm* or audience — retaining the tradition of the Oral Tradition’s basis in individual/community call-and-response kinesis into collective *houm* (222).

Brathwaite’s *houm* is reminiscent of Charles Olson’s manifesto “Projective Verse” (1950), with its emphasis on the ‘possibilities of the breath’, the ‘revolution of the ear’, and the kinetics of poetry. The score Brathwaite references suggests a formula comparable to Olson’s syllable/line dyad as the two halves of a poem. These halves are conceived through corporeality and movement: ‘the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE / the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE’.

Although Brathwaite stresses the influence of sound and print technologies here, it is important to remember that the oral tradition is also seen and heard during poetic performance; rather than the visual of words on a page, the audience watches the performer as they translate the poem with their body, as discussed in chapter two in relation to the work of Antiguan-Québécoise poet Tanya Evanson and Caribbean-Canadian poet Clifton Joseph. The body’s presence in poetics is

suggested by Olson's capitalisation of the head, the ear, the heart, and the breath. Like Brathwaite's *houm*, Olson's poetics are enacted off the page (though he is concerned also with orthographic inscription), within 'BREATHING' and an antiphonal impulse between components, whether head and heart or individual/community. Furthermore, Brathwaite's depiction of antiphony as kinetic stresses the movement of sound between points and between calypsonian and audience. This communion between a participatory, kinetic audience and the calypsonian is analogous to Brathwaite's *tidalectic* understanding of diaspora, the "natural" discursive alternative (alter/nativ(e)) to the Hegelian dialectic: instead of an 'inevitable', 'Euromissilic' tripartite *synthesis*, KB posits a tidal ebb&flow' (*ConVERSations* 226) — like the ebb and flow of sounds, of breath, crystallised in the enactment of the oral tradition. Brathwaite's understanding of the oral tradition as 'part of a total kinesis' synaesthetically imbricates aural, textual, and dance modalities, and promotes a tidalectics created and projected by the body, a notion further developed by Brathwaite's definition of the Caribbean, discussed below.

To explore this synaesthetic, transboundary invocation of the oral tradition and its relationship to the landscape, it is useful to consider Brathwaite's attempt to define the Caribbean in terms of his tidalectics. Brathwaite cites an image of a Jamaican woman sweeping the sand in her yard away from her house, and references Derek Walcott's poem "The Testament of Poverty" (1950). In *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*, Brathwaite discusses the Sisyphean statement central to Walcott's poem in terms of the diasporic condition and 'poverty's unending future' (32). He locates the meaning of the Caribbean, 'these

beautiful islands — yes — which are contrasted in their beauty with extreme poverty and a sense — a memory — of catastrophe' (29), in 'that humble repetitive ritual actio(n)' of sweeping (33):

one morning I see her body silhouetting against the sparkling light that hits the Caribbean at that early dawn and it seems as if her feet, which all along I thought were walking on the sand... were really... walking on the water... and she was travelling across that middle passage, constantly coming from where she had come from — in her case Africa — to this spot in North Coast Jamaica where she now lives (32-33, ellipses original).

The recurrent, sweeping journey of Brathwaite's '[t]raditional early morning old woman of Caribbean history' is emblematic of the waves of migration to the islands, a cyclical conception of poverty, and a repetitious echo of that violent journey that demarcates her from her African heritage (30). Brathwaite's construct of the sweeping woman simultaneously enacts a tidalectic invocation of diaspora with the ritualised movements of her body's constant journey in a temporal and spatial blend. Significantly, the symbolic gesture of sweeping is also incorporated into the ritual of carnival, as recorded by Lovelace in his *Port of Spain* novel, in a passage worth quoting at length:

Up on the Hill Carnival Monday... little boys... holding brooms made from the ribs of coconut palm leaves, blowing whistles and beating kerosene tins for drums, move across the face of the awakening Hill, sweeping yards in a ritual, heralding the masqueraders' coming, that goes back centuries for its beginnings, back across the Middle Passage, back to Mali and to Guinea and Dahomey and Congo, back to Africa when Maskers were sacred and revered... linking the villagers to their ancestors, their Gods, remembered even now, so long after the Crossing, if not in the brain, certainly in the blood (112).

Here, the young boys of the Hill operate as representatives of an ancestral past, which aligns with Morrison's understanding of African ontologies, in which '[c]hildren can actually represent ancestors or grandmothers or grandfathers' ("Come" 130). In this way, the boys sweeping yards ritualistically perform the same journey as Brathwaite's peasant woman, 'travelling across that middle passage, constantly coming from where she had come from... to this spot' (*ConVERSations* 33). The brooms they carry are supplemented with whistles and kerosene tins for drums, linking this tidalectic invocation of diaspora to a sonic and kinetic beat that simultaneously sweeps the yard, and, like the sonic rope cast to Alice during the Silent Parade on Fifth Avenue 'for rescue, the drums spanned the distance, gathering them all up' (58), unites the inhabitants in sound, movement, and rhythm. In *Jazz*, this tidalectic image is succinctly expressed, as the narrator imparts that even the 'grandmothers sweeping the stairs' are not immune to the seductive power of the 'City seeping music that begged and challenged every day' (67). Thus, in both Lovelace and Morrison's texts, music is portrayed as seeping from and sweeping across the City and the Hill, speaking to, even imploring, the inhabitants of each, investing the urban topography with the antiphonal, synaesthetic impulse of the oral tradition.

Mackey too suggests a relationship between topography and antiphony in his poem "On Antiphon Island", published in *Splay Anthem* (2006): 'On Antiphon Island they lowered / the bar and we bent back' (64). Utilising the symbol of the limbo dance, the poem's physicality emphasises the kinetic responses of the body to the environment and imposed rule or boundaries: 'Everywhere we / went we / limbo'd, legs bent, shoulder / blades grazing the dirt'. This contorted human shape

expresses a sense of dislocation and the treachery of history: ‘backs embraced by / The / ground and the ground a fallen / Wall / we were ambushed by’ (64).

Mackey’s engagement of the landscape in this poem is an endeavour shared by Lovelace, the subject of his 2013 lecture in Vancouver, “Reclaiming the Rebellion”.⁸ Lovelace employs the spatial metaphor of the thick stone walls and fortresses of Cartagena, Columbia, which serve as remnants and reminders of the Caribbean’s colonial past:

These walls had been constructed more than 200 years ago and have stamped their character on the landscape, so that whatever had to be built on this space afterwards had its character determined by what went before (“Engaging”).

Lovelace compares history to the walls of Cartagena, a history that continues to have implications for the present. Lovelace recognises a renewed relationship to the landscape as imperative to a positive reclamation of the rebellion in the Caribbean, and stresses its importance to the formation of Caribbean identities: ‘the past is not only about the things that have been done to our various ancestors, but what they have done — their resistance, struggle and creation’ (“Engaging”). He recalls the resilience and creativity of the ancestor, suggesting that these capacities offer a useable history and an alternative interpellation, reminiscent of Mackey’s use of the limbo dance in his poem. The symbolic use of the limbo dance and this connection between landscape and the figure of the ancestor will be developed in the following paragraphs, with a view to demonstrating the rebellious and affirming power of dance and its importance to identity formation in the African diaspora.

In Lovelace's text the importance of memory to the creative process is understood in a corporeal invocation of a bloodline that connects Aldrick, Lovelace's titular Dragon, to his ancestors and mythologies, 'their Gods, remembered even now, so long after the Crossing, if not in the brain, certainly in the blood' (112). Aldrick wears his dragon costume 'with only the memory burning in his blood', endowing him with an 'ancestral authority to uphold before the people of this Hill, this tribe marooned so far from the homeland that never was their home' (112). Mackey discusses this memorialising function of Caribbean cultural practices and inheritances in *Discrepant Engagement* (1993), focusing on limbo both as a memorial for the sufferings endured in the Crossing and a celebration of survival. Mackey harnesses Wilson Harris' positioning of Amerindian and African legacies, rituals, and symbols as 'a limbo gateway between Africa and the Caribbean' (Harris 11). This limbo gateway articulates a liminal state, but also references the origins of the limbo dance, believed to have emerged from the holds of ships transporting slaves across the Atlantic, where movements were so restricted by the lack of space that 'slaves contorted themselves into human spiders' (Harris 11). Brathwaite is credited for transforming the symbolic function of limbo to 'a sign of the Middle Passage and the creative survival of African cultures in the Americas' (Emery 54), through his trilogy *The Arrivants* (1981). Indeed, Harris quotes from Brathwaite's poem "Limbo" to support his limbo gateway thesis. In the poem, the limbo dance 'becomes a means of survival... a ritual invocation of the African gods, and a trickster strategy related to the spider fables of Anancy' (Emery 54). Mackey concurs that '[t]he outspread, spiderlike sprawl of the limbo dancer's limbs' enforces this relation between the dance and

the trickster god, and points out that the Anancy tales, of Akan origin, 'are widely known in the Caribbean, very much a part of the region's folklore' (168). Thus, the use of the trickster god Anancy sanctifies limbo, offering an accessible, liberatory, and adaptable configuration that encodes a symbolic, kinetic memorial of the Middle Passage and celebrates survival through dance.

The limbo gateway conception offers a supplementary perspective with which to view those 'waves of migration' suggested by Brathwaite's metaphor of sweeping, as Harris defines successive waves as possessing 'the stamp of the spider metamorphosis' (11). The idea of limbo as metamorphosis intimates a greater degree of growth and development than Brathwaite's definition of the Caribbean, where the journey across the sea is never-ending and poverty is cyclical, and which, despite the motion of the tides, seems oddly fixed and static — or perhaps *recursive*, in Mackey's sense, a 'repeated ritual sip, a form of sonic observance aiming to undo the obstruction it reports' (*Splay* xiv). This boundedness can be seen in Brathwaite's poem "Islands" (1969), in which '[l]ooking through a map / of the Antilles, you see how time / has trapped / its humble servants here' (*Islands* 47). Synthesising Harris and Brathwaite's evocative notions of the wave, which Brathwaite invests with the subversive sound of the blues-as-nation-language, allows for a synaesthetic, transboundary conception of the oral tradition and its imbricated relationship with the landscape — here, the Caribbean archipelago.

Harris identifies:

something else in the limbo-anancy syndrome which... is overlooked though intuitively immersed perhaps in Edward [Kamau] Brathwaite's poems, and that is the curious dislocation of a chain of miles reflected in the dance (11).

This dislocation does not encourage a simple 're-trace of the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas and the West Indies', but 'reflects a certain kind of gateway or threshold into a new world' (11). In this way, the limbo dance (where participants rhythmically negotiate their bodies beneath a gradually lowering bar) acts like the doorway in slave songs, offering a liminal space invested with a transformative and transportive power.

Furthermore, Harris' limbo gateway contains a complex of meanings hinging upon translations of the word "limbo", which symbolically represents: a dislocation of a chain of miles; a liminal state often understood as purgatory; the 'phantom limb related to amputation or, in this context, geographical and cultural... dislocation'; and a mode of 'spectral or phantom remembering of a dismembered past' (Mackey, *Discrepant* 168, 169). This configuration is spatial, constituting a chain of miles; temporal, collating a dismembered past; and suggestive of the body, the quasi-material, and the postbody, conjuring both phantom limb and purgatory. The limbo gateway thesis is also reminiscent of Edwards' understanding of diaspora, which for him is a 'term that marks the ways that internationalism is pursued by translation', necessitating a process of connection across gaps in time and space, 'a practice we might term *articulation*' (*Practice* 11). To describe this process of connecting across gaps, Edwards employs the French word *décalage*, which he translates as: "gap," "discrepancy," "time-lag," or "interval"; it is also the term that French speakers sometimes use to translate "jet lag." In other words, a *décalage* is either a difference or gap in time... or in space' (13). Edwards quotes from Stuart Hall's 1980 essay "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance", to set out the two meanings of the word articulation:

“both ‘joining up’ (as in the limbs of the body, or an anatomical structure) and ‘giving expression to.’” ... [Hall] suggests that the term is most useful... [when pushed] toward its etymology as a metaphor of the body (14).

This ‘bodily’ sense of the word gains credence when we think of what it means to articulate a joint; Edwards muses: ‘the joint is a curious place, as it is both the point of separation... and the point of linkage... [*Décalage*] alludes to this strange “two-ness” of the joint’ (15). He finally concludes that:

paradoxically, it is exactly such a haunting gap or discrepancy that allows the African diaspora to “step” and “move” in various articulations... in the body it is the only difference — the separation between bones or members — that allows movement (15).

This idea of the gap or discrepancy in time and in space allowing the diaspora to move in various articulations is expressed kinetically; the language Edwards employs is suggestive of dance, in which *décalage* enables the African diaspora to “step” and “move”. The limbo gateway is marked by this sense of *décalage*, acknowledging the separation or two-ness of the joint, the haunting gap between Africa and the Caribbean, as a conduit for bodily and cultural re/articulations of experience. This mobile concept of the limbo gateway allows for an emphasis on cultural possibilities and innovations, not the ‘total recall of an African past’ but ‘the renaissance of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of cultures’ in the Caribbean (Harris 12). Limbo allows a reassembly, a metamorphosis, a dislocation and transcendence of temporal, spatial, and physical limitations. As a totem in the texts of Mackey, Harris, and Brathwaite, it is invested with the kinetic, with the

movements of the body, a liberatory manoeuvring of limbs, and it works to articulate sociocultural rebellion and resilience. The practice of limbo enables movement despite immense restriction, operating as a living, breathing, kinetic memorial to the horrors of the Middle Passage.

Phantom Limb, Broken Ground: The Threads and Scales of Dragon Dance

According to Mackey, the power of the limbo gateway lies in its capacity to liberate the Caribbean 'of a reductionist historiography that imprisons it in its deprivations' by reinvigorating 'a tradition of folkish cunning, or imaginative, Anancy-like response to those deprivations' (*Discrepant* 169). The harnessing of the trickster figure reinscribes and reanimates a history of survival and resourcefulness; in Lovelace's novel, it is the dragon dance that operates as a response to the deprivations endured by the inhabitants of Calvary Hill. At the core of the text, in a chapter entitled "To Be Dragon and Man", itself a liminal configuration of identity that evokes the metamorphic stamp of the limbo gateway, Lovelace excavates the meaning of the dragon dance and its invocation of historical memory. In his study *Masking and Power* (2002), Gerard Aching suggests that the bloodlines and the ancestral 'memory that flows through them transcend geographical borders and real deterritorialization' which ultimately accomplishes, through an appreciation of the dragon dance, 'the definition, rationalisation and advocacy of the Hill's place in the African diaspora' (62). In this way, Aldrick's dragon dance interpellates the community as Aldrick himself is interpellated 'by an ideology of nonpossession' (Aching 61), devoting his life to the creation and performance of the dragon dance,

until he finally comes to believe that the ‘life between Ash Wednesday and Carnival Monday morning, it counted for something’ (*Dragon* 124). Aching identifies several types of dragon dance as he employs the work of Bruce Proscope to trace its genealogy to the Jib-Jab or Devil Mas’. Proscope’s research situates the birth of the dragon (or devil) band with ‘astonishing exactitude’ at ‘what is now No. 65 Queen street in the City of Port-of-Spain’ (qtd. in Aching 55), underscoring the strong connection between the figure of the dragon and the specific urban topography of the city. The types of dragon dance described in Aching’s account, informed by Proscope, are reflected in Aldrick’s performances — he lunges at onlookers, for example — and in the craftsmanship he invests in his costume:

It was only by faith that he could bring alive from these scraps of cloth that dragon, its mouth breathing fire, its tail threshing the ground, its nine chains rattling, that would contain the beauty and threat and terror that was in the message he took each year to Port of Spain (27-28).

A sense of corporeality is emphasised as Lovelace describes the dragon’s mouth ‘breathing fire’ and its tail ‘threshing the ground’, suggesting a disruption of the landscape. The dragon projects into city space, but it is Aldrick’s body that both births the dragon and animates it; it acts as a kind of postbody that transforms and projects this representative of the Hill. There are biblical references in the articulation of the dragon dance — indeed, Lovelace’s designation of *Calvary* Hill has inescapable biblical resonances suggestive of ‘a site of torture, suffering, and testing, redemption, transformation, and hope’ (Lewis 165). The dance simultaneously enacts and memorialises the experience of slavery, as the dragon rattles its nine chains. Errol Hill explains that, as former slave populations

contributed to the development and proliferation of carnival festivities in Trinidad, they brought a 'ritualistic significance, rooted in the experience of slavery and in celebration of freedom from slavery' (21). Former slave populations shaped carnival from its roots as a 'European-inspired nature festival' into 'a deeply meaningful anniversary of deliverance from the most hateful form of human bondage' (21). Aching suggests that 'the presence and sound of chains [and whips] in the city's streets... and the dragon's restricted movements' recalls a history of bondage, oppression, and exploitation whilst 'hinting at an imminent liberation' in the dragon's threatening movements and efforts to free itself (56). Other dances that the dragon performs include a dance frequently referred to as "crossing the water", invoking the Middle Passage, and a dance that involves 'mimicry and "play"' between neighbouring steelbands and masqueraders, the choreography of which 'negotiates and establishes territorial boundaries' between them (Aching 56). This repertoire suggests a complex choreography corresponding to various social and cultural functions, to be understood, like limbo, in an imbricated spatial, temporal, and kinetic modality.

As its title suggests, Lovelace's novel ostensibly follows the decline of carnival in post-independence Trinidad. Lovelace paints this decline as a consequence of the dislocation between carnival and rebellion:

there was a stage at which carnival was used by a section of society to express themselves, and to affirm themselves, and the expression of resistance and rebellion, right? And, I don't know whether that would have lasted forever, you know, but once the society began to see itself as not any more rebelling, now we have independence, and in this kind of way we're not having change really... it isn't linked to resistance, it isn't linked to rebellion (interview with the author).

This severance led to the commodification of carnival, depicted in the novel as the steelbands accept corporate sponsorship, incurring sanctions on their behaviours and practices. Aldrick's own epiphanic abandonment of playing *mas'* points to a realisation of what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as the *temporary* liberation carnival offers from prevailing values (15). This fleeting sense of liberation is amplified by Lovelace's portrayal of the aftermath of carnival, as Calvary Hill on Ash Wednesday is 'like a silent corpse without music or movement' (121). Lovelace's description is suggestive of the abandoned costume of the dragon, devoid of the rhythms and movements of Aldrick's body. In Lovelace's novel, carnival operates as a structure akin to Morrison's voyeuristic City, allowing the inhabitants to claim urban space whilst drawing the parameters of that space, ensuring the socio-spatial hyper-visibility of the participants and, simultaneously, their containment and political invisibility. Furthermore, the migrant populations of Harlem and Calvary Hill project into city spaces which seek to control and suppress their revolutionary potential. Carnival both exposes the extent to which the centralised city controls marginalised populations, and acts mimetically, ritualistically challenging the bounds and imagining a future in which they will be broken, described by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White as 'a sort of 'modelling', at once utopian and counter-hegemonic' (18), exemplified by the dragon dance: despite its chains, the dragon threatens and suggests imminent release, creating an imagined space of anticipated freedom and locating that space in the contemporaneous moment in the streets of Port of Spain.

Aldrick braids the exodus of his family from rural Trinidad to the city into the dragon, which becomes a 'visual repository for his genealogy and philosophy of life' (Aching 60). This structural metaphor allows him to carry the peripheral

shantytowns into the centre of Port of Spain: ‘He worked it all into the latticework of this dragon, into the scales and the threads’ (31). Through the investment of the dragon with sound and kinesis — its scales redolent of musical notes and its movements syncopated by steelpans — the dragon dance interpellates identity through its multimodal composition of textiles, auralities, and visual resources, carrying the fabric of the Hill to Port of Spain. As Aldrick works the experiences of the Hill into the latticework of the dragon, he architects a message from the scraps of cloth, another example of Mackey’s recursiveness, which ‘plies memory, compensatory possession, reminiscent regard and regret’ (*Splay* xiv). This weaving together of little pieces is analogous to the praxis of language; Mackey writes that recursion can be understood as:

conjunctive deprivation and possession, phantom limb, as if certain aroused and retained relations among consonants and vowels and progressions of accent were compensatory arms we reach with, compensatory legs we cross over on (xv).

Mackey’s concept allows us to envision language kinetically, as a kind of dragon dance, and as creating a liminal space, a compensatory phantom limb composed of articulation. As J. Edward Chamberlin writes in *Island* (2013): ‘the word “metaphor,” the signature of stories and songs, means “to carry across”’, again expressing the kinetics of communication (xii). This linguistic embodiment can be detected in Homi Bhabha’s reading of Derek Walcott’s poem “Names” (1976). In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha’s examination of cultural translation culminates in his analysis of Walcott’s poem and the right to signify. Walcott’s exposition on the acquisitive power of naming through what Bhabha refers to as his

‘call to language’ (336), articulates the relationship between language and cultural hybridity in an episode of translation: ‘Listen, my children, say: / *moubain*: the hog plum, / *cerise*: the wild cherry, / *baie-la*: the bay’ (209). Walcott’s francophone and anglophone translations express the distinct histories, cultures, colonial legacies, political ideologies, and languages that exist in the Caribbean archipelago, which both foregrounds the ‘disjunctive temporality of translation [and] reveals the intimate differences that lie between genealogies and geographies’ (Bhabha 336). The overtly fragmented sense of a Caribbean identity in Walcott’s poem ‘disrupts the homogeneity of the imagined community of the nation’ (330). Walcott’s effect is, to apply the work of Rudolf Pannwitz as cited by Bhabha, not ‘to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German [but] instead to turn German into Hindi, Greek, English’ (326). The goal is not ‘an ur-language which all of us recognise when we hear it’ (336), but, in the words of Richard Rorty, a ‘[s]olidarity... constructed out of little pieces’ (94), like the scraps of fabric from which Aldrick constructs the dragon, highlighting the materiality of language: as Aldrick’s body must articulate the limbs of the dragon costume, the human body, vocal chords, mouth muscles, must move to construct sound. Thus, Bhabha advocates movement towards the borderline negotiations of cultural translation evident in “Names”, a textual genealogical/geographical repository or poetic collage constructed, like Lovelace’s dragon, from a latticework of threads and scales.

Walcott’s poetic sensibility is analogous to this formulation of cultural identity expressed in little pieces; in his Nobel address “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory” (1992), Walcott compares cultural hybridity to a mended vase:

This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles... Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent. And this is the exact process for the making of poetry (506).

Walcott's metaphor stresses the mobility of his archipelago, 'pieces broken off from the original continent', suggestive of a continental drift that secures the Caribbean between the American and African continents, connecting the landscapes geologically. The broken vase, with its fragments and 'white scars' (506), can then be compared to plate tectonics and the shifting boundaries of the very planet upon which all human life exists in an inclusive image that both highlights the natural growth, development, and hybridity of global cultures, and the violence of the Middle Passage, slavery, and struggle for emancipation and independence in the 'care and pain' of the Antilles. In this way, Walcott's image honours the processes of the restoration of black culture under the enormous challenges of subjugation and oppression by colonial powers, and crystallises a vision of African presence in the Caribbean, where Amerindian populations were decimated by European colonisation.

Using imagery akin to Walcott's mended vase metaphor, Mackey cites Brathwaite's *The Arrivants* in his discussion of the Caribbean condition as one of fragmentation and dislocation; Brathwaite writes 'So on this ground, / write... / on this ground / on this broken ground' (qtd. in Mackey, *Discrepant* 178). Mackey argues that the 'broken ground' is:

the island topography itself, the separation of the islands from one another as though they were remnants of some larger, sundered whole. It is also the ground of other breakages and a metaphor for such breakages — the

broken, alienated labor of slaves and descendants of slaves... [the break with] old world continuities and “coherencies,”(178-179).

Mackey returns to the influence of the landscape itself on Caribbean identity — the ecological breakdown caused by mono-crop agriculture, the dependence of Caribbean residents on outsiders due to the legacy of the plantation system.

Lovelace’s text is invested with such descriptions of a broken, incoherent landscape:

where the sun set on starvation and rise on potholed roads, thrones for stray dogs that you could play banjo on their rib bones, holding garbage piled high like a cathedral spire, sparkling with flies buzzing like torpedoes (1).

Here, Lovelace reimagines symbols of Western power and hegemony, so that ruined roads act as thrones for stray dogs rather than royalty, and European monuments are akin to a towering pile of refuse. Aching describes this depiction of Calvary Hill as ‘a living tableau of forsaken poverty that literally mocks and disguises “underdevelopment” in its invocation of thrones, a cathedral spire, and pillars’, characterising its inhabitants as a dispossessed community (52). The imagery Lovelace uses carnivalises these symbols of hegemony through a ritual inversion of the ‘everyday hierarchies, structures, rules and customs’, so that orderliness and separateness give way to ‘the heterodox, messy, excessive and unfinished informalities of the body and social life’ (Stallybrass and White 183). Stallybrass and White contend that, as part of this process, ‘[s]tatus degradation through exposure of the grotesque aspects of the body’, represented by the starving dogs and the piles of refuse, re-open ‘the body-boundary, the closed orifices of which

morally guarantee the repressive mechanism' (183, 184). Lovelace thus subverts colonial structures with bodily ones: movement necessitates collision with the "grotesque" or abject aspects of the body, when to travel from 'your yard to the road you have to be a high-jumper to jump over the gutter full up with dirty water, and hold your nose' (1). The borders and demographics of Calvary Hill are represented corporeally, its people 'the blue-bloods of a resistance lived by their ancestors', who have pitched on 'the eyebrow of the enemy' (2). In his opening descriptions, Lovelace's blending of high/low symbolism appears to emulate the tradition of ritual inversion while forging a liminal position between states. Furthermore, his use of symbols of colonial power plays with cultural paradigms; as Brathwaite contends, the cultural paradigms of societies (which he organises by continent) 'can be 'read' from the totems of their landscape'; he assigns the missile as the totem of the European landscape, the circle to Africa, and the cenote to the Americas (*ConVERSations* 115). While Walcott's "Names" is redolent of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967), in which he writes that 'the so-called proper name, is always caught in a chain or a system of differences', becoming 'only an appellation to the extent that it may inscribe itself within a figuration' (89), Brathwaite's continental ideograms are 'broken or constellated into a system' that refers simultaneously to 'a chain of differences "in space"' and sound (*Grammatology* 90). Derrida's constellation of a chain of differences in space and sound is compatible with Harris' sense of the limbo gateway as disrupting a chain of miles, whilst Lovelace's reimagining of the missilic totem reduces the military might of the oppressor to parasitic flies buzzing around human waste. The effect of this confusion is not only to emphasise the incoherencies, bounds, and conditions of

poverty the citizens of Calvary Hill must negotiate, but to highlight the obstacles and realities that Lovelace insists have to be integrated into a renewed engagement with the landscape. Lovelace's metaphor of the walls of Cartagena, their immovability, their rootedness in the topography and history of that locus, can be read in Brathwaite's demand to write *on this broken ground*, to address and reclaim the histories and spaces, the genealogies and geographies, in which the Caribbean people live.

Lovelace's telescopic opening narrative focuses on one street in the myriad of streets that comprise the 'guts' of the Hill (1). The occupants of Alice Street are overtly positioned at the periphery of the city, delineating the contours of the rebellion in terms both of geographical borders and an ideological anti-materialism. In the years after independence, Aldrick and Fisheye, the "Bad John" stickfighter of carnival who patrols the boundaries of Calvary Hill, find themselves guarding a shifting ideological territory in which the Corner becomes peripheral rather than central to the Hill's values; they are 'boxed increasingly into that rectangle of pavement and street... at the foot of the Hill' (158). This shift is not just spatial but temporal, as Aldrick ruminates that they are 'losing a battle with the times... The people wanted to move on... to surrender that rebellion they had lived for generations' (158). Aching argues that Lovelace does not figure 'change as a homogenous, isolated loss' but rather he painstakingly depicts 'the complex dispositions of competing human subjectivities and the manner in which their engagements constitute the community's overall character' (64). Such changes occur, for example, in the music and lifestyle of the Hill's calypsonian Philo, whose 'calypsos of rebellion' lack a commercial market (*Dragon* 113). It is only when Philo

adopts and proliferates a stereotypical posture, '[p]rojecting himself as The Great Fucker in Axe Man', that he becomes financially successful, and in the process converts the cry of "all o' we is one" to an individualistic and plaintive "I is we" (*Dragon* 222). Later, Philo's revenge calypso, which condemns hooliganism on the streets of Port of Spain, alienates him from Aldrick, and with his success he resettles in an affluent area of Trinidad. Yet Louis James asserts that Philo becomes the 'new voice of the people' and highlights the performativity of his role: 'Philo creates his 'mask' not through paint and cloth, but in self-dramatisation within the ambivalent rhetoric of his calypsos' (195). Philo is '*role* serious, not real serious' and adapting to the profitable demand for a new style of calypso 'brought him back to his own affirming irreverence that had seen him through his boyhood' (*Dragon* 223).

Lovelace devotes the final chapter of his text to the calypsonian and renders a childhood in which Philo, marked as different due to his slight stature and Baptist upbringing, is given 'a nickname in every class he passed through, as if his schoolfellows needed to identify him anew, name him again for himself and them' (218). In doing so, Lovelace offers a sympathetic portrayal of Philo and tempers his betrayal of the Hill, contextualising his ability to adapt and construct an identity with which to negotiate the demands and operations of the dominant group. Philo is so convinced by his own performance that he is perplexed by the response of his former neighbours, claiming 'I is still Calvary Hill, no matter what you see me do, you is me and I is you' (148). The significance of Philo to Lovelace's text is often underplayed by critics such as Aching, but is demonstrated by the gift of the final chapter to "The Calypsonian" in a text ostensibly focused on Aldrick's dragon. Although Lovelace positions Philo's revenge calypso as 'the epitaph to [the]

rebellion' (156), he makes it equally clear that Philo feels compelled to 'sing what the people want to hear' (104). As Nadia Johnson suggests, Philo 'is chronicling the social decline of the hill that Aldrick laments' (6) — 'the abandonment of "the rebellion bequeathed them by their parents," for the promise of modernity' (8). Furthermore, Aldrick conceives of his own actions — his support of Philo's banishment from the Hill by Fisheye — as a betrayal of his friend (151). In fact, as the narrative develops to scatter Aldrick, Fisheye, Sylvia, and Paraig from Calvary Hill, it is Philo who returns to Alice Street, and is welcomed — both into the community, and into Queen Cleothilda's bedroom.

The Calypsonian in the Sonic Continuum

Kwame Dawes underscores the significance of calypso within Trinidadian culture in his study of West Indian literature, where he argues that Trinidadians have a greater understanding of the 'dynamic relationship between popular culture and literature... because of the long and powerful tradition of calypso music' (120). The power of calypso music lies in its ability to 'capture and shape the psyche of the Trinidadian people', influencing and enabling social commentary and a sense of identity through popular culture, as it 'celebrated an attitude to life, a self-deprecating wit and irony' rooted firmly in the island landscape (120). Dawes suggests that the work of Lovelace and Walcott is influenced by the cadences, rhythms, and preoccupations of calypso music; whilst Lovelace situates his novels 'in a world that is marked by the combination of suffering and resilience', thematic preoccupations of calypso, Walcott, born in St. Lucia but a resident of Trinidad for

many years, ‘found in the music an important form and structure that could be applied to his poetic sensibility’ (120). Indeed, Walcott writes of Trinidad in “The Antilles”, claiming both that Port of Spain holds ‘the sum of history’, and is ‘a downtown babel of shop signs and streets, mongrelized, polyglot, a ferment without a history, like heaven’ (507). Walcott describes a Port of Spain that is a ‘writer’s heaven’ with its multiplicity of languages that demarcate the spaces of the city in inscriptions, through signification — the shop and street signs — while the lack of capitalisation in the word ‘babel’ allows for an intimation not just of the city of Babel but of the word babble, an indecipherable string of words and sounds. Walcott’s polyglot, multiply-inscribed Port of Spain articulates Mackey’s assertion that the breakages both inherent to and inflicted upon the island topography, and evoked through the experiences of slavery and diaspora, are connected to writing, to the Derridean ‘idea that the very possibility of writing signifies and is indebted to a cosmogonic severance known as *différance*’ (*Discrepant* 179). Walcott’s call to language, for example in his description of Port of Spain as a ‘downtown babel’ and in his emphasis upon phonic and antiphonal exchanges ‘*Listen, my children, say*’ (emphasis added), denotes the play of differences, or in Derrida’s phrasing, the ‘becoming-space of the spoken chain’ (“Semiology” 217), locating ‘the alliance of speech and Being in the unique word, in the finally proper name’ (*Margins* 27). Furthermore, Derrida’s sense of *différance* can also be applied to the syncretic spatial, temporal, and dissociative divisions of the Caribbean topography, evident in Lovelace’s vision of history as the immovable walls of Cartagena, or the fallen walls that nonetheless ambush the limbo-dancing occupants of Mackey’s “Antiphon Island”. Humans inhabit language as well as landscapes: employing *différance*

allows for a view in which the practice of writing offers itself as a juncture, implying Edwards' *décalage*, a process of connecting across gaps, a point both of separation and linkage, 'a haunting gap or discrepancy' authorising articulation, facilitating meaning (*Practice* 15). Edwards elaborates:

décalage is the kernel of precisely that which cannot be transferred or exchanged, the received biases that refuse to pass over when one crosses the water. It is a changing core of difference; it is the work of "differences within unity", an unidentifiable point that is incessantly touched and fingered and pressed (14).

Edwards' unidentifiable point touched, fingered, and pressed incessantly is reminiscent of the ruffle and splay of the pages of Morrison's talking book, the readers' 'fingers on and on, lifting, turning' (229), or the scales and threads of Lovelace's dragon, the kernel at the core of a metamorphosis performed in the crossing of the water. These linkages between landscape and language are echoed by Chamberlin's account⁹ of the journey of the ancient migrations of the Amerindians to Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean, whose 'navigators would need to remember the movements of the signs (the "words" of their watery worlds) and the relationships between them (their "grammar" and "syntax")', characterising navigators as storytellers (44).

Although Lovelace's novel traces the decline of carnival and intimates a surrender of the rebellion, Brathwaite, writing contemporaneously in the late sixties, concedes that the 'increasing urbanization of Kingston and Port-of-Spain' has led to 'a growing element of protest (and comfort) in the calypso and the ska', suggesting a direct correspondence between urbanisation and the articulation of rebellion through music. He goes on, however, to denote this growing element of

protest as 'mainly literary', focusing his analysis on the 'literary elements' of calypso and ska, along with the 'more sophisticated and elaborate structures of West Indian poetry and novels' in order to forge connections with jazz (337). Noting the limitations Brathwaite sets upon calypso, Dawes suggests that:

Despite Brathwaite's attempt to use jazz as the basic metaphorical structure upon which to understand and appreciate West Indian literature, his own work would benefit from a calypso-inspired reading of narrative, story-telling techniques, and the use of language (121).

In the work of writers such as Lovelace and Walcott, V.S. Naipaul and Samuel Selvon, music in fact informs the 'sophisticated and elaborate structures' of Caribbean literature; among their pages, the folk form of calypso is not 'a peculiar entity that reflects an exotic cultural ethos which is being observed and critiqued by the writer' (121). Rather, 'the music, and the culture surrounding and undergirding the music, are an elemental part of the structure of the works' (121). Instead of literature validating or legitimising the folk form, calypso both shapes and provides a measure for the literature in Dawes' conception.

This notion of calypso as resource for literature is supported by Brathwaite's public conversation with Mackey. In his comparison of jazz and calypso, Mackey identifies a shared sense of 'dissonance, and vibrations, and rumbles coming up from the bottom'; whilst jazz has, for diverse writers, served to 'sound their discontent, or the rifts that were tearing at the social fabric' (*ConVERSations* 312), Mackey sees analogies to this in calypso, reggae, and dub poetry — the latter forming 'the very root(s) of hip-hop' — and all of them existing:

on a continuum, going from a blues line that runs through Bessie Smith, and runs the dozens, signifying various forms of oral and verbal performance, that workers with the written word, the printed word, can make use of, and take some of the spirit of (313).

Mackey's understanding of black musics rooted in African survivals, developing the oral tradition as a continuum, emphasises a diasporic connectedness through sonic intervention and innovation. Like Ramey's conception of the slave song's importance to American culture (she argues that they should be part of the canon) calypso offers a repository of recorded history of diasporic experience in the Caribbean that its writers can 'make use of' and 'take some of the spirit of', investing the text with the structures, cadences, rhythms, and spirit of calypso, steelband, and carnival.

Mackey's sonic continuum is encapsulated in the synaesthetic imagery of crossing the water figured by Nikki Giovanni, whose evocation of the sounds of the slaveship can be harnessed to invest Gilroy's chronotope with auralities. This aural investment resurrects the often obscured history of women in critical debate and draws the female ancestor into the contemporaneous moment through the repetitious echo of the gospel hum in — to use Rice's formation — an aural memorial. Similarly, synthesising Brathwaite's tidalectics with his use of the limbo metaphor, developed by Harris as the limbo gateway, positions the liminal space of the ocean as a portal between African and Caribbean cultural inheritances and practices. Such survival and metamorphosis of cultural forms both memorialise a traumatic past and celebrate the achievements, creativity, intelligence, and agency of the ancestor despite the intense restrictions and degradations of slavery. This celebration offers an alternative interpellation to members of the African diaspora

that both restores a useable history and articulates a revolutionary potential to alter or subvert inhabited spaces and narratives.

The ability of the occupants of Morrison's Harlem to kinetically architect — or author — the urban landscape proposes an antiphonal engagement with the cityscape. This kinesis is routed through the polyphony, multiplicity, and simultaneity of Morrison's mosaic-like jazz narrative, which highlights the transboundary, synaesthetic agencies of the body. Similarly, beyond its implications for the movement of the ancestor, the limbo gateway thesis elicits Edwards' configuration of diaspora as necessitating a web of connection across temporal and spatial fissures, a process which he compares to the articulation of bodily joints and designates as *décalage*, implying both separation and linkage. The crossing of the water into the City articulates this sense of *décalage*, as Morrison intimates a severance between the migrants and their histories. *Décalage* is further traceable in the "little pieces" of Walcott's call to language, his metaphor of the broken vase to express the fragmented topography of the Caribbean archipelago, and the fabric of Lovelace's Hill, intersected with porous and sprawling borders that demarcate its thronging, polyglot populations. The multimodal, synaesthetic art forms inherent to carnival, and the blended oralities, inscriptions, and performances of jazz, its 'total kinesis' (Brathwaite, *ConVERSations* 224), forge a doorway or portal through which the ancestor is invoked, transgressing spatial and temporal boundaries. These slippages and movements through the kinetic portals of Morrison's Harlem and Lovelace's Port of Spain intimate a porousness that allows the diaspora to step and move, mimetically challenging physical, social, and imaginative barriers and conceiving a revolutionary debordering of city space.

Gap in the Map: Writing the Razed Cities and Porous Borders
of Africadia and Black Pacific Canada

The Canadian imaginary has traditionally been dominated by the scale of the natural landscape, privileging sites of wilderness, the theme of survival, and the naturalised presence of nordic populations despite the displacement and continued oppression of native peoples, Canada's "First Nation". Literatures centred on the Canadian urban are often viewed as countertexts against this dominant metanarrative; however, since the 1990s, interest in urban studies in Canada has steadily grown, along with, seemingly paradoxically, the rise of ecocriticism. In her essay, "Who's Afraid of the Urban?" (2011), Eva Darias-Beautell borrows from Justin Edwards and Douglas Ivison to summarise this trend as the "turn to the city", and asserts that the concentration of Canadian populations in cities and large towns has 'undermined the most traditional modes of nation narration, forcing both writers and critics to transcend them' (349, 342). In *Downtown Canada* (2005), Edwards and Ivison attest that 'Canada is an urban country, yet this fact has often been elided from our public discourse, our national mythologies, and critical discussions about Canadian literature and culture' (6). Although there has been 'mass migration of Canadians from the country to the city in the last century', wilderness and nordicity continue to dominate discourses of Canadian identity, neglecting the lived experiences of most of the country's citizens (Edwards and Ivison 6-7). This chapter will show that there is in fact seepage between wild and urban spaces in Canadian literature, forging a blended interstitial space for experimentation with radical cartographies of cultural identity. Readings of

Canadian cultural criticism reveal quite starkly the pitfalls of a homogenised, ascribed national identity: reductive binary categorisations are often imposed upon Canadian literatures that deny their multiplicity and complexity, and this trend is compatible with the promulgation of national myths.

In the greater diasporic narrative of North American slavery, Canada's reputation persists as a place of freedom and escape from the racial tyranny experienced in the United States.¹ This construction has become cemented in the national psyche, but Canada's involvement in slavery is more complex than this narrative would suggest. Although Canada was not a slave society in the manner of the United States (its economy was not based on slavery) the enslavement of native and African diasporic populations was practiced in pre-Confederation Canada for over two hundred years.² In her research on the hanging of Marie-Joseph Angélique, a Portuguese-born slave executed for the burning of Montréal in 1734, Afua Cooper describes slavery as Canada's 'best-kept secret, locked within the national closet... written out of official history' (68). Cooper's diligent explication of Canadian slavery complicates the cultural bias that portrays Canada as a land where slaves gained freedom. In fact, from the late eighteenth century many Canadian slaves were escaping southward into free American territories.³ The porousness of the border between African American and Black Canadian histories will be examined later in the chapter, particularly in terms of the use of American cultural icons and texts as models, a resource for adaptation into the Canadian context.⁴

Beyond this elision of Canadian slavery from received official histories, Rinaldo Walcott points to Canada as 'a land troubled by questions of race and space, whether we are speaking of First Nations land claims, Quebec nationalism or

the absented presence of Canada's others' (44). Walcott's configuration demonstrates how the representation of Canadian landscapes and the proliferation of national myths that deny racial histories are intertwined; as Darias-Beautell insists, 'any process of construction of subjectivity *is* a spatial practice... the articulation of space inevitably becomes enmeshed in historic, racial, cultural, and gender contingencies' ("Afraid" 347). Limited conceptions of what defines Canada or the Canadian experience work to 'other' Canada's black populations, erasing them from the country's histories and cartographies. Walcott's "absented presence" is articulated throughout many texts by Black Canadian writers, artists, and musicians who conceive of their work as a battle against erasure. This battle aligns with projects of historical recuperation such as Cooper's *The Hanging of Angélique* (2006). In George Elliott Clarke's foreword to Cooper's text, he connects the erasure of black history in Canada to the destruction of black neighbourhoods such as Africville, a community on the outskirts of Halifax, Nova Scotia demolished in the 1960s. Cooper comments that:

The erasure of Black people and their history in the [example of]... Africville is consistent with the general behaviour of the official chroniclers of the country's past. Black history is treated as a marginal subject. In truth, it has been bulldozed and ploughed over, slavery in particular (7).

This erasure points to the sense of socio-political invisibility posited in chapter two in relation to Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952), and the destruction of black neighbourhoods depicted in Toni Cade Bambara's *The Salt Eaters* (1980). Black history and presence in Canada is demolished in the example of Africville, a razing Clarke attends to in his poetic and critical practice, symbolically rebuilding Africville.

Walcott's interpretation of the fate of Africville accords with that of Clarke's, although the two critics are often presented as theoretically divergent.⁵ For Walcott, the razing of Africville made 'the desires to render black peoples and blackness an absented presence in Canada... literally and symbolically clear' (44). Similarly, British Columbian writer Wayde Compton, a founding member of the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project (HAMP), which aims to recuperate a racially black-defined space that befell a similar fate to Africville in 1967, stresses that 'there is nothing luxurious about fighting against erasure or elision' in the context of building a Black BC aesthetic (*Bluesprint* 32). Clarke and Compton's complementary projects to recuperate and restore what is lost through the razing of communities such as Africville and Hogan's Alley will inform an analysis of their writings here. Their creative and critical works, including Compton's poetry and prose collections *Performance Bond* (2004) and *The Outer Harbour* (2014), creative-critical work *After Canaan* (2010), and anthology of Black British Columbian literature and orature, *Bluesprint* (2001), and Clarke's critical *Odysseys Home* (2002), suite of *Execution Poems* (2001), novel *George and Rue* (2005), and anthology of Black Nova Scotian writing *Fire on the Water* (1991) illustrate Sneja Gunew's point that minority writers must accept the challenge to 'redefine the public sphere and the academic perception of this new literature' by editing anthologies, crafting theoretical structures, and writing criticism, as well as producing their own creative work (314). Clarke and Compton's prolific creative and critical production is testament to the project of 'retrieving a history of denied violences within Canadian borders, and thereby eschew[ing] a "nationally sanctioned ignorance", in Spivak's words, which prevents self criticism' (Fraile). These violences, viewed through the lens of

psychogeography, are epitomised not just in the threat of erasure against black cultural practices, but the razing of black communities such as Africville and Hogan's Alley. While the intricate and nuanced historical and cultural differences between each of Canada's provinces are beyond the scope of this project, this chapter will focus largely on two geographically distant and culturally distinct provincial areas: the Maritimes — or in Clarke's neologism, Africadia — and Black British Columbia. The aim is not to explicate how geographical and historical forces have shaped black experience on the East and West coasts, for to do so would in effect essentialise Compton and Clarke as black provincial representatives, and elide black populations in Central Canada and black francophone writers. Instead, I wish to emphasise the scope of the Canadian geographic imagination and diverse literary topography of a country that is often overlooked in postcolonial debate, and which, according to Clarke, is popularly defined by white conceptions of the North. When questioned about the audience for whom he writes in a 2002 dialogue with Compton and Kevin McNeilly, Clarke clearly expresses the pressing motivation behind his writing and anthologising projects: 'I'm also trying to signal to the rest of the world... We exist! We've been here for a long time and for what it's worth, here's our literature' (McNeilly 57). This chapter will examine how Clarke and Compton map, transform, and establish Africadia and Black BC respectively.

Black Canada battles against erasure and elision in the critical arena as well as the historical annals of Canadian chroniclers. Clarke is particularly critical of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), partly because its omission of Canada, particularly Atlantic Canada, reinforces the Americo-centrality Gilroy purports to eschew. Clarke states that to 'open Paul Gilroy's signal work... is to confront, yet

again, the blunt irrelevance of Canada to most gestures of diasporic inclusiveness'

(*Odysseys* 8). He continues:

He never registers [Canada] as a site of New World, African enslavement, immigration, emigration, anti-racist struggle, and cultural imagination. For Gilroy, Canada seems merely a semi-European and semi-American projection requiring little consideration... his *Black Atlantic* is really a vast Bermuda Triangle into which Canada — read as British North America or Nouvelle France or even as an American satellite — vanishes (8-9).

Clarke's criticisms are not confined to Gilroy; he identifies Gilroy's omission as part of a generally limited critical allowance for 'the possibility for any real Canadian blackness' — as Clarke complains: 'one could compile a rather substantial library of African-Atlantic materials witnessing the generic invisibility of Black Canada in black-oriented scholarship' (10). This invisibility is also at work in what Clarke calls Gilroy's "gap in the map" (81), a blindness Cooper refers to when she describes the whitewashing of Canadian involvement in slavery, the root of black experience in space defined by nordicity: at once invisible and hyper-visible, the black presence an aberration against the white(ned) landscape (Clarke, "Poles Apart?").

However, Gilroy's paradigm is not without value for others whose focus is Black Canadian writing. Despite divergent opinions on writing blackness between himself and Clarke, Walcott shares this concern with erasure, describing Black Canadian experience as 'an absented presence always under erasure. Located between the U.S. and the Caribbean, Canadian blackness is a bubbling brew of desires for elsewhere, disappointments in the nation and the pleasures of exile' (27). Yet Walcott harnesses Gilroy's frameworks; he sees Gilroy as developing 'an expansive space that traverses time, history, memory and the workings of black,

and in particular black metropolitan communities' cultural practices' (165). Walcott uses Gilroy's paradigm in his own work to signify the importance of diasporic connectedness to regional and national politics, although he cautions against using the Black Atlantic 'as a way to essentialize blackness across space and time' (165). In his introduction to *Black Like Who?* (2003),⁶ Walcott quotes from Gilroy's *Against Race* (2000), which offers diasporic frameworks as an 'alternative to the metaphysics of "race," nation and bounded culture coded into the body' and which 'disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location and consciousness' (Gilroy 123; R. Walcott 23). Compton, too, refers to Gilroy's *Against Race* in the introduction of *After Canaan* to frame his essay collection as a contribution to 'cultural recovery and advocacy' and the 'empowered subject position that comes after strategic essentialism and unreconstructed identity politics' (17). Compton's work represents a hybrid movement that experiments more freely with identity configurations; by placing his focus on the empowered subject formation *after* identity politics, Compton aligns with a postmodernist focus on Charles Taylor's "politics of difference", promoting *varied* black experience and the reformulation of fixed notions of black identity. Of the 'conceptual bounds of the African diaspora' Compton writes:

looking to the margins rather than the centre has a unique value... there are things to be learned from owning and exploring oblique kinds of blackness. In the periphery, where there are fewer local expectations of what "the black experience" ought to be, radical experiments of identity can be tried (13).

Compton's foregrounding of "oblique", marginal, multiple blackness free from the quagmire of local expectations celebrates the "politics of difference" espoused by Taylor and developed by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994), which signals cultural hybridity to be the locus from which 'newness enters the world' (303). As the following reading will explicate, Compton's reclamation of peripheralism exposes the porousness of imposed or implied borders between margin and centre, wild and urban, experience and myth, and Canadian and American cultural production.

Migration, Drift, and Echo: Rerouting Historical Narratives of Displacement

Compton engages with many of the themes and foci of diasporic literature presented in the preceding chapters of this study in his prose collection *The Outer Harbour*. Indeed, a multimodal experimentation with mapping the city, its portals and vortexes, and migrations through time and space, islands and kinesis, all cohere in Compton's stories, which are populated by phantasmic postbody projections. Compton's work also presents the opportunity to, as Heather Smyth advocates, 'explore further what happens when diasporic cultures are moved into unexpected territories' (389). For her, Compton:

illustrates a commitment throughout his work to "rewriting a northern actuality" in the face of pressing and inherited diasporic narratives that render black Western Canadian experience, in his terms, "Afroperipheral": "the appendix of the epic and the echo of the odyssey" (389).

While engaging with the ‘inheritances of black diasporic culture’ — influenced particularly by Kamau Brathwaite — Compton also ‘explores the cultural and creative possibilities of new circuits made possible through new cultural exchanges, challenging the idea that black Vancouver culture is merely peripheral to an already-established diasporic core’ (Smyth 389). To this end, Compton addresses questions of race and space that trouble the landscape of British Columbia in his short story “The Lost Island”. Furthermore, the story suggests Brian Jarvis’ stress of landscape as human-worked, composed, and defined in Compton’s evocation of the *language* of dirt in the written body of work that springs up around a volcanic island that appears in the middle of the Burrard Inlet off the coast of Vancouver (44).

Compton writes:

Hyaloclastite breccia. Opaque petrology. Co-ignimbrite plumes... A hundred fancy words for dirt. Flaming dirt rising up out of the dirt spewing a mist of dirt all over the settled dirt. It is... impossible for her not to think of how colonized her thinking is (34).

Compton’s focus on the language of dirt emphasises the sculpting of landscape for human purposes, and, crucially, the rhetoric of colonisation employed to define the use and ownership of space. The text grapples with attempts to define the still-shifting island: government authorities initially determine it a restricted ecological reserve, while Fletcher claims it as ‘New Pan-Indigenous Territory’, unceded native land (40).⁷ In Compton’s story “The Boom”, a palimpsestic collection of fictionalised posters and blueprints, the island is rezoned, incorporated into the City of Vancouver, and commercially developed as ‘Vancouver’s newest waterfront’ (109), intimating the seemingly unrelenting expansion and redevelopment of the

cityscape. In the title story, the island morphs again, becoming a detention centre for migrants who can displace themselves, “winking” in and out through portals in space in what Compton wryly terms ‘Individual and Collective Displacement Phenomenon’ (170). Indeed, a number of stories in the collection express a concern with the treatment of migrants by authorities and the media. The “ICDP” migrants are incarcerated on the island due to their inability to ‘blink onto the ocean’ (172). Compton’s portrayal of Pauline Johnson Island, as it is named in each incarnation, foregrounds the capitalist, patriarchal, and racially hegemonic forces that shape our environment. His use of a volcanic island denaturalises the processes of definition and colonisation, and complicates the concept of nation — Pauline Johnson Island is ‘a country with a less than two year timeline. Its ancient past... under the ocean floor... sloshing around in the core of the Earth. A midden of magma’ (36). The island’s ancient past exists beyond the reaches of recorded national histories, its locus at the core of the earth as in flux as the processes of nation and culture, redolent of its shape-shifting reincarnation as Pauline Johnson Island.

The island is named for the Mohawk poet and performer who settled in BC, while Compton’s title “The Lost Island” echoes Pauline Johnson’s story of the mythical Island of the North Arm in her collection of stories *Legends of Vancouver* (1911). The loss of Johnson’s island is connected with the loss of native culture, in which the unrecovered island is the locus of the courage and strength of the medicine man as native ancestral figure, where it awaits rediscovery by his people.⁸ A reviewer notes of Johnson’s embrace of her native ancestry that she ‘billed herself as a Mohawk princess although she was only one-quarter Mohawk’,

describing her as a 'shape-shifter' and thus aligning her with the lost island itself (Thiessen 26). Further reinforcing a connection between landscape and language, Compton's revolutionary leader Fletcher suggests that each time the volcano 'coughs' it is speaking Mohawk (36). Fletcher becomes obsessed with the composition of the island, 'acquiring the lingo... of palagonitization and wind drift, allochthons and ferry wash', suggesting its scripted, storied nature; he concludes that '[w]ords need the air and weather to make things develop' (37), characterising language as a landscape with its own attendant ecology. Jean, the only black character among a small group of First Nation insurrectionists, dreams that she becomes part of the island's 'ecological succession': the language of the island 'makes its way into Jean's dreams... She is seagrass... She is thimbleberry. She's a starfish rotating in the untouched shallows, near, but not of, the rippled land' (38). Jean's separation, near but not of the land, points perhaps to her racial difference from the rest of the group, a difference she signals at their first meeting: 'I'm not Native, Jean says, planting her non-sequitur in the air... I don't know if I should be here... should I be here?' (35). Here Compton suggests the broader question of black belonging in Vancouver, and explicates Jean's identification with the aims of the group in terms of the racism and estrangement she meets in the city:

For Jean there is within this crazy plan a kind of retort to the Vancouver she has known... all the where-are-you-froms and all the where-are-you-really-froms; being looked at or looked through... pre-emptively estranged (37).

Compton's diction is suggestive of the invisibility and hyper-visibility posited by Ellison's *Invisible Man* and by Clarke as part of the black experience in the US and

Canada. Against this estrangement, Jean's imagining of the island ecology emphasises diasporic connection. The flora and fauna of the island are:

a chain of creatures spreading north and south and east and west from all shores. A dandelion seed under the feathers of a gull... When Fletcher tells her that they call seeds that drift over on the wind "diaspores," she makes him show her the book that says this. She re-reads the sentence five times over (38).

The notion of drifting is developed here from the academic language of Fletcher's geological reports to suggest the 'cultural need to, fill in a diasporic gap', to 'measure the translations of African, Caribbean, and African American diasporic cultures as they migrate, drift, and echo' across the waves (Smyth 390). Whilst Smyth's focus here is the sonic schema at work in Compton's poetics and the transmissions of dub poetry, her honing of the terms migrate, drift, and echo is useful to our critical engagement with Compton's imagery of "diaspores". Smyth argues that the:

connotations of reception and detour in those terms — migrate, drift, echo — are challenged in Compton's work by his charting of both the inheritances of the Black Atlantic and the translations of those inheritances through new cultural connections, archiving and generating what can productively be called a Black Pacific node of the black diaspora (390).

Jean's assertion that she 'can't think of a single person related to her by blood who knows how to swim' (38) and transformation into a human diaspora at the end of the story — pregnant with Fletcher's child, she is carried away from the island through the air in a net suspended from a helicopter — serves to illustrate this challenge to the inheritances of the Black Atlantic and generates an alternate vision of diasporic identity by displacing (but still suggesting) the centralising image of the

Crossing. The new cultural connections forged by Compton reroute historical narratives of displacement and are suggestive of the social and cultural realities of specific spaces and places: his intertextual nods to Pauline Johnson's work, and foregrounding of native land claims, evidence his excavation of indigeneity alongside his concern with grounding black presence in Vancouver.

Reading "The Lost Island" through the lens of migration, drift, and echo as key images, Compton's story articulates the movement of the body through time and space through a blending of kinesis, postbody, and visual inscription. Furthermore, Compton connects the genesis of the collection to his role as cultural activist, particularly with the recuperation of Hogan's Alley. About the project of "urban renewal" that displaced the original black community in Vancouver, Compton states: 'I was thinking a lot about how urban space is manipulated by power, and how ordinary people are influenced by policy decisions about space', framing *The Outer Harbour* as an examination of how 'space is parcelled out socially' ("Writer"). This spatial focus is demonstrated by Fletcher and Jean's reconnaissance of the island, as they view it from different points on the mainland. From Lighthouse Park, they can see not only the island but Point Grey, the site of a previous island viewing; Jean 'imagines a resonance, an etch of her presence... a spiritual echo from across the body of water. A premature ghost of herself' (39). These spatial and temporal reverberations of identity populate Compton's text with postbody projections of his characters. Further references to the movement of the postbody through space and time recur in the following paragraph, as Fletcher guesses that a container ship on the open sea is 'probably full of fucking televisions. Televisions on the water... You'd think teleportation machines existed until you

really think about a thing like that' (39). In his observation, Fletcher conjures a migratory and temporal concept of visual culture, in which television serves as conduit for the transmission of visual information and cultural codes. Additionally, Compton's text includes visual storytelling strategies such as glyphs, sketches, and newspaper excerpts, transcriptions of radio interviews (rendering the sonic visual), and aerial maps of Vancouver drawn by the ghost of a six-year-old migrant girl, weaving a narrative collage. This multimodal composition points to a concern with inscription and an evolution of Compton's use of the ideogram, discussed in chapter two in terms of cuneiform and the *vévé* of Legba, which acts as a portal between worlds.

A fascination with inscription is expressed in bodily terms in "The Lost Island", most powerfully in two instances: that of Jean's description of Marc's tattooed arm, and the message Fletcher writes in the volcanic ash of Pauline Johnson Island. Compton writes:

Marc told her that he inked the image himself. The outline of a wing, raggedly drawn. Blue-green, freehanded. She imagines the pose required to hold a needle with one hand and draw steadily upon your own arm — to hold yourself in front of yourself like you would cradle a clipboard. She realizes the shaking evident in the image is the pain that looped between the art of one arm and the mark-making other (35).

The inscription of the outline of a wing on Marc's skin is comparable to the hand-drawn outlines that appear later in the text, maps of the city in a wing-like shape, the lines dividing the green of the land and the blue of the sea on the black and white images. Additionally, the references to arms could imply the legend of the Island of the North Arm, and connect art with kinesis and the inscription of and

upon the human body. There is also something of the postbody in Compton's configuration of the need to 'hold yourself in front of yourself' like a clipboard. Compton extends this kinetic articulation of inscription to include the island more overtly as Fletcher attempts to sustain the group's occupation by communicating with the police in nearby boats. As he writes his message in the volcanic sand, the following is again focalised by Jean: 'It's like he's gliding across a ballroom floor. Soft-shoe or Indian-style, she can't decide. Either. Both' (46). Compton highlights kinesis in Fletcher's initial orthographic inscription upon the land, his message in cuneiform, sculpted into the volcanic ash: we are armed. Fletcher's movements are granted a hybrid style as he inscribes the porous sand: either and both. Jean fashions Fletcher's inscriptions as the 'island's first dance' (46), emphasising the limbs of the human body, inaugurating the culture of Pauline Johnson Island, and again referencing the legendary isle of Johnson's tale. In this sense, Fletcher's message could imply the recuperation of the spirit of the native ancestor, the medicine man of "The Lost Island" (1911). The poster section of the book reveals that Fletcher Sylvester becomes a revered figure among anti-colonisation groups, enshrined as a political activist and martyr — whilst the other members of the group are taken away from the island and detained, Fletcher is shot dead (103).

In "The Lost Island", Compton also foreshadows his final story in the collection, "The Outer Harbour", in which the ghosts of Fletcher and the six-year-old migrant girl attempt to rescue a 'composite' from the burning city. These 'composites' have been developed as a form of crowd control to suppress riots and demonstrations, the 'Multiple Perception Immobilization Device' which 'projects holographic images of people into a crowd, causing a perceived doubling or tripling

of crowd density' and thus restricting freedom of movement (181). The holograms are constructed from composites of scanned images of demonstrators so that they 'resemble the demographics of the targeted crowd' (181). The composite rescued by Fletcher — here, simply 'the insurgent' — and the migrant ghost girl flickers as they cross the ocean to Pauline Johnson Island, but once they arrive '[n]o more flickering. Dead. There' (193). The quasi-material existence of Compton's ghosts and composites articulate a porous, interstitial space of identity and embodiment. Furthermore, the story continues to weave the themes of migration, drift, and echo: while drifting is part of their journey, it stirs memories for the insurgent, 'brought up by the boat, the journey, and all its echoes' (193). Jean's imagining of the island's composition in "The Lost Island" prepare the reader for the theme of replication pursued in the later stories: 'Symmetry. Starfish. Symmetry. Sand dollars... Fractals of bodies made out of bodies and carrying forth bodies of the past' (40). Compton overtly highlights the symmetry of the stories as Jean signals the proliferation of composite postbodies and ghosts. His use of natural imagery such as fractal patterns, found in coastlines, mountains, and seashells, for example, are suggestive of the recursive patterning and feedback loop involved in the creation and projection of his composite figures. Chapter two advanced that Compton's postbody poetics inform his manipulation of the dub plate and sonic schemas; here, Compton borrows from the genres of fantasy and science fiction to create a visual schema that invests the migrations, drifts, and echoes of the Black Pacific with the postbody.⁹

Crossings and Palimpsests: Black Canadian Cartographies of Identity

Compton's assertive Afroperipheralism not only battles erasure and elision, asserting the right for Black Canadians to exist, but encourages vitality, growth, and diversity, 'radical experiments of identity' that do not seek to return to an 'imagined essence of a past blackness' (*After* 13, 15). This subversion of essentialism can be seen, for example, in Jean's experience of crossing the water in "The Lost Island", which explicitly foregrounds symbols of modern surveillance and law enforcement such as helicopters and combat technologies, acutely contemporialisng the commemorative metaphor by reflecting the lived experience of urban populations. In a similar vein to the assertive Afroperipheralism advocated by Compton, Walcott stresses that he does 'not seek to promulgate a simple notion of inclusion for this is no longer necessary, sufficient nor required — black Canadas exist and will continue to do so' (31). His attention is directed instead towards 'the spaces or gaps through which our current thinking on diaspora might receive continued invigoration if a detour is taken through Canada' (31). Walcott's framework allows for a recuperation of Gilroy's "gap in the map"; his reminder of Gilroy's 'assertion that other travels need to be mapped and charted' allows for the usefulness of Gilroy's Black Atlantic paradigm to Black Canadian scholarship, despite what Clarke regards as Gilroy's configurative oversight (R. Walcott 32). Walcott's position on writing Canadian blackness as a "detour" may initially appear to reinforce a sense of Canadian peripheralism to the discourse of diaspora; however, he defines the detour as 'an improvisatory and an in-between space which black diasporic cultures occupy' (31). Walcott refers to Black *Canadas*

rather than any singularly defined black consciousness delineated by the geographical contours of the Canadian landscape. Clarke also expresses this sense of multiplicity when he states:

in Canada you don't have as much reinforcement of a black identity which means you have a harder time to insist on one and communicate one and to live a black identity... That also means that you have a lot more freedom to be other things... A lot more space than you have in the US. On the other hand, if you want to organize against police brutality, against racism in the school system... you're going to have a harder time (McNeilly 61).

These observations implicitly reveal Clarke's advocacy for the use of African American political models, and his understanding of the power and pitfalls of such configurations. Whilst insisting on their separateness, Clarke emphasises African American and Black Canadian commonalities, as they:

share a history of marginality that has impinged on the constructions of their literatures... For both *états*... the development of usable identities, in the face of strong, countervailing, imperial(ist) influences, has driven their histories (*Odysseys* 74).

The Black Canadian embrace of useful African American models and influences, including texts, icons, and political and cultural movements, gains further support in Clarke's call for a national Canadian Black Arts movement, utilising the language forged by African American cultural activists ("Poles Apart?"). In *Odysseys Home* (2002) he succinctly outlines the position as such: 'The oft-cited 'lack of unity' among African Canadians is... the result of the instability of black-as-signifier *chez nous*' (16). Whilst 'America has a national consciousness... Canadians are products of provinces and regions. They are jealous about inculcating a strong provincial identity because provinces control education' (interview with the author). Clarke

expresses the need for a national Black Canadian address that operates beyond the intersections of Black Canadian and regional identities, and defines regionalism as a residue of colonialism, emphasising that colonies were not connected to each other but to the London metropole.

Clarke's Africadian cartographies meticulously archive black heritage within Canada. The necessity of Clarke and Compton's complementary projects can be read in Clarke's concern that Gilroy portrays Canada as an American satellite, which in turn bespeaks Canadian (and global) absorption of African American cultural production, as raised in chapter two in the context of the global denaturing of hip-hop. By the time he published his first book of poetry, *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues* (1983), Clarke felt that he was 'assuredly Black Nova Scotian', but the 'adjective 'black' was [generally] shorthand for 'Black American' (*Odysseys* 4). He himself 'still considered Black America the Mecca of true 'blackness'... Motown, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr.' (4). The Americo-centrality of such conceptions of blackness connotes estrangement in the Nova Scotian environment: 'our Black American cultural inclinations made us automatically subtle, subterranean, and 'subversive'' (5). Here Clarke's rendering suggests that the porousness between the US and Canadian cultural borders was more pronounced in black communities.

Reflecting on HAMP's activities in *After Canaan*, Compton writes that the black population of Vancouver 'hold no substantive claim to Strathcona apart from memories... and a body of interviews, art, and creative literature' (104). Compton renders the 'perceived absence of blacks in Vancouver' (Walcott's absent presence) as an 'optical illusion' (105), and suggests that this perception explains the

resurgence of interest in Hogan's Alley as the home of black history in Vancouver, noting that '[s]ince the decline of the community in Strathcona, Vancouver has never had another centralized black community — a wholly unusual thing for a North American city of its size' (*Blueprint* 19). Some might interpret racial integration in Vancouver as a success, and Compton himself concedes that he sometimes finds it strange that:

the segregation that my forebears so soundly eschewed has become, in some ways, a point of crucial interest for my generation; that we seek empowerment there, in a location that they sometimes remember as a place they *escaped* from — a slum or, more gently, the humble origin out of which they happily ascended (*After* 108-109).

However, Compton explains Hogan's Alley — its 'chicken houses and church and dormitory' — as 'what we have to look to for a foundational narrative of presence... as something that grounds us in Canada' (109). Furthermore, Compton positions Hogan's Alley as an intermediate site of interpretation and exchange between African American cultural touchstones and a need for a distinctively Canadian identity. Compton's language here echoes Clarke's experiences of constructing a black identity from African American cultural influences:

We need Hogan's Alley because Motown songs and Martin Luther King are from another, different place. They come through the TV. They come through books. Hogan's Alley, however, ran between this and that side of *right here* (109-110).

Compton reflects a shifting sense of origin between the generations that lived in Hogan's Alley and the generations that have followed, and expresses the significance of remembering Hogan's Alley as the historic heart of Vancouver's

black populations. Although Compton is keen to ground black presence in Vancouver, his ethos of 'embracing... unusual black experiences, rather than trying to return to the imagined essence of a past blackness' which he designates as 'an assertive Afroperipheralism' is not reserved for Black Canadian identity formations, but something he identifies in the journey of Barack Obama (*After* 14-15). Asked to respond to the inauguration of Obama as the President of the United States in January 2008, and pressed to address what the election meant 'for blacks *here*', Compton suggests that Black Canadians 'may have a more intimate identification with [Obama] than most black Americans do' (14). Compton sets out his claim with convincing comparisons between the experience of Obama, from Hawaii, and the lived experiences of Black British Columbians, including similarities between the racial and cultural demographics of Hawaii and BC, 'places defined by their Indigenous and Asian minorities rather than blacks' (14). Both sites exist:

outside the diasporic master narratives: our communities developed beyond the sites of slavery; interracial families are our standard experience rather than an exceptional or suspect one; our dialect is the same as the dominant society ("Standard English"); and though there are old black families in BC, a great many of us are immigrants or the children of them (14).

Because of their position 'at the outer rim of black centres', Black Hawaiians and Black Canadians on the West Coast are, according to Compton, 'in charge of our own enculturation', and he identifies intimately with Obama's memoir *Dreams from My Father* (1995), in which Obama describes 'piecing together his black identity' from the resources of popular media, books, and meetings with other black people (*After* 14). Compton's advocacy of an assertive Afroperipheralism is therefore an inclusive movement that highlights diaspora connectedness and which emphatically

renders as porous the borders between transnational articulations of blackness. Emphasising Black Canadian “criss-crossing” of the border with the US, Rinaldo Walcott relates that many ‘fugitive slaves return to the United States after emancipation (t)here and this practice has continued to mark black North American border-crossing’, offering contemporary examples such as conscientious objectors seeking sanctuary in Canada from the US during the Vietnam War, while ‘at the same time, some black Nova Scotians were leaving Canada and moving down the eastern seaboard after the razing of Africville’ (41). Such examples lead Walcott to theorise blackness as ‘an interstitial space’ existing outside of national boundaries, exemplified in his use of brackets in his (t)here signal for border-crossing conceptions of (trans)national identities (41).

Compton invokes such an interstitial space for border-crossing conceptions of transnational identities in “The Reinventing Wheel”, which he performs as a spoken word poem:

James Brown never said, “Say it loud,
I’m mixed-race in a satellite of the U.S. and proud.”
There’s no echo, but there is culture
falling from the firmament like virga,
and I’m an instrument of the verge...
We ain’t maintaining, yet we be
defamiliar (*Performance* 106).

Compton’s appeal for the representation of oblique kinds of blackness is articulated in his ironic utilisation of African American icon James Brown, and he characterises his art here as defamiliarising a culture of identity politics which ‘falls from the firmament like virga’, precipitation that dissipates before it hits the ground. Later, Compton fashions himself as a conqueror when he references Daniel Defoe’s

Robinson Crusoe (1719) in the line 'I echo New York back / like a code-cracker. / Reality-hacker. A Crusoe' (108). However, it can be argued that here, as in his "(Bottle) (Poems)", Compton evokes Derek Walcott's figure of Crusoe 'as poet' (Smyth 396). In his long poem "Crusoe's Island" (1965), and his 1978 play *Pantomime*, Walcott uses the image of Crusoe to 'dismantle the very idea of hierarchical positioning' or 'unitary identity', and positions Crusoe within a liminal space 'in which a more radical interrogation of power hegemonies can be conducted' (Thieme 78, 153, 127). This sense of liminality is strengthened later in the poem:

I shake my rattle to the global click track: product/product/metronomic
 ethnic nationalist manna crackles
 out of satellites like
 prestidigitation. All my fellow post sufferers
 at sea in the new lingua franca, the stutter: we are a cargo cult
 of reception. A buffer
 between selves (110).

Compton's 'buffer / between selves' exemplifies an interstitial space for border-crossing, transnational identities, while his unifying call for '[a]ll my fellow post[colonial] sufferers' synthesises Rinaldo Walcott's crisscrossing of the North American border and Clarke's sense of an African American and Black Canadian shared history of marginality. Compton's language here focuses on rhythm and repetition: his multiple visual and/or aural images of the stutter, the crackle, the speaker's shaking rattle and the metronome (signifying the repetitious 'product / product', the metrical ticks of an aural pulse and accompanying synchronised visual motion) coalesce the sine-waves and sea-waves of 'the new lingua franca' which unifies members of the African diaspora as a 'cargo cult of reception'. This use of

stutter is compatible with Brathwaite's notion of the achievement of definition through stutter and repetition (*ConVERSations* 27). The sonic aspects of Compton's rendering of the space between himself and New York, and in his invocation of a cargo cult that can 'receive' the new *lingua franca* of the stutter can be understood as acoustic space, a discontinuous 'space of the gap, of resonance' (Cavell, *McLuhan* 150). For Marshall McLuhan, spatiality is 'a distinguishing feature of Canadian cultural production', and he believed that 'the spatial was also capable of acoustic configuration' (Cavell, *McLuhan* 197, 54). Applying McLuhan's theories allows us to appreciate the diasporic connectedness with which Compton imbues his textual-acoustic space: in contrast to Northrop Frye's binary view that 'the fundamental experience of Canadian literature was of a hostile and intractable land and of the physical and intellectual garrisons built to keep it at bay' (Cavell, "Ordered" 14), which he fixes as a "garrison mentality" (Frye 226), McLuhan instead posits a network of "decentered galaxies" in his work *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962). McLuhan's decentered galaxies 'explicitly resituated the relation between native and cosmopolitan, wild and urban, (or even between Canada and the US)' by conceiving of place as a network 'without a stable centre in dynamic interface' (Darias-Beautell, "Afraid" 342; Cavell, *McLuhan* 206). Compton's work articulates the dynamic interface of a decentered galaxy as he echoes New York back 'like a code-cracker', while 'manna crackles / out of satellites'; furthermore, his comment that culture falls 'from the firmament' appears to support McLuhan's notion imagistically. The decentered galaxy which facilitates communication between members of Compton's 'cargo cult', and its magical, transformative properties ('like prestidigitation'), is further explored in Compton's poem "Legba, Landed".

In “Legba, Landed”, collected in *Bluesprint* and appearing in Compton’s first publication, *49th Parallel Psalm* (1999), Compton utilises the symbol of Legba from Haitian voodoo, working the symbol orthographically into the structure of his poem by setting out, for example, the ‘four / cardinal points / for / a better over there. created a here’ in the shape of Legba’s *vévé* (*Bluesprint* 274). In voodoo belief, Legba is located at a spiritual crossroads and permits or denies communication between humans and spirits who are able to speak all human languages through a metaphysical doorway. Thus Legba’s *vévé* offers an orthographic praxis that constitutes a liminal, postbody space (between humans and spirits) and forges a portal that allows movement through gaps in time and space, like Brent Hayes Edwards’ concept of *décalage*, discussed in detail in chapter three. Additionally, Compton’s line ‘a better over there. created a here’ echoes Walcott’s use of the (t)here signal to connote border-crossing conceptions of place.¹⁰

In keeping with the recurrence of border-crossings, interstitial spaces, and temporal vortexes, Compton adopts Brathwaite’s neologism *tidalectics* in opposition to Hegel’s dialectics as a way of ‘seeing history as a palimpsest, where generations overlap generations, and eras wash over eras like a tide on a stretch of beach’ (*Bluesprint* 17). Brathwaite’s kinetic concept has a spatial potentiality as well as offering a palimpsestic conception of time. Legba’s magical portal between worlds allows for communication across generations and with ancestors despite the shifting histories and geographies of what Brathwaite has elsewhere described as ‘the seemingly / endless / purgatorial / experience / of black / people’ (“Dream” 132).¹¹ Therefore, the opening lines of “Legba, Landed” (‘he crossed. the border / line in a northern corner’) are ideologically inscribed with questions of language,

diaspora, the body, and directionality (*Bluesprint* 274). Cavell notes how McLuhan's spatial theory, particularly as it related to psychic and geographical space, 'uses linearity to undo the linear, thereby making 'borderline' into a metaphor of acoustic space: the resonant interval' (*McLuhan* 197), across (or within-and-beyond) which Compton's oralities echo. McLuhan applied this particularly to the Canadian context; in his essay "Canada: The Borderline Case" (1977), he states that 'Canada is a land of multiple borderlines, psychic, social, and geographic' (244). In the context of Canadian identity and interstitial space, Doreen Massey's model of place helps us to understand that it is possible to 'sense the simultaneous presence of everywhere in the place where you are standing' (*Space* 162). Rather than taking a binary view in which locality is fixed within boundaries that set it apart from 'the other which lies beyond it', Massey sees place as 'open and porous' (5); places 'can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings', positively integrating the local and the global ("Power-Geometry" 66).

"Legba, Landed" locates these complex issues at the arrivals gate of a Canadian airport, which operates as a modern portal between "worlds". Compton's innovative orthographic representation of cultural hybridity is demonstrated by a line which is subvocalised as 'one foot in A / merica' and 'one foot in a / Canada' but which is actually set out on the page as 'one foot in A one foot in a / merica. Canada', the lines straddling a distance of blank space, a borderline-as-interval framed by the coordinates of the body (*Bluesprint* 274). The crossing of the Canadian-US border is problematic in Compton's complex portrayal, which reveals how staunchly the 'strait razorous border' is guarded, patrolled, and enforced:

he believed himself
 into the mirrorous glass a
 cross the border.
 customs: are you carrying any
 baggage?

 in the razor-thin space between my lines,
 you may fit in. line up
 and pay your sin
 tax (274-275).

Compton's poem situates the black experience of border crossing in the context of the physical crossing of national borders staffed by authorities. In his review of Compton's *49th Parallel Psalm*, Julian Manyoni writes that the poem 'illustrates the more sinister aspects of the migrant experience, exposing white xenophobia hidden in the national rhetoric of tolerance and multiculturalism', whilst throughout the collection, he 'continually takes aim at the myth of Canada as a haven for immigrants and a land of opportunity, highlighting the impenetrability of borders in numerous pieces'. This impenetrability and a sense of hostility is suggested by Compton's line highlighting the 'razor-thin space' in which to 'fit in', implying the restrictiveness of ascribed, homogenised national identities. Like Walcott's examples of the historically entrenched politics surrounding Black Canadian-US border crossing, Compton's poem illuminates the tensions between a border-crossing conception of black identity and the lived experience of traversing borderlines within a society that scrutinises the movements of its black populations. Compton's poem emphasises how people arriving through Canada's borders are controlled and corralled in a highly racialised register, where 'eyes bear the white burden / of watchful wardens' who 'patrol each shade of un / white', which

suggests that entry into Canada is inflected with racist attitudes and subject to a totalising white gaze, further implied in his use of rhythmic slant-rhyme: ‘Mount Zion, baptise me abysmal. / Abyssinian of obsidian meridians’ (275). His juxtaposition of ‘obsidian meridians’ and ‘flashing yellow magma’ with a ‘silver... / sparkle of meridian... / a razorous rain / a glade / of terrain’ (274) is not unlike Clarke’s notion of a hemispheric, environmentally configured racialism (“Poles Apart?”).

The title of Compton’s first collection of poems, *49th Parallel Psalm*, locates his work firmly in the longitude of British Columbia. Although neither BC nor his hometown of Vancouver is overtly referenced in “Legba, Landed”, Compton’s imagery suggests a Vancouver-centric indexing of the urban landscape, the city’s imaginary dominated by tall ‘mirrorous’ glass buildings. The geographic location of downtown, surrounded by water, woodland, and mountains, is also conjured in Compton’s reference to a palette of ‘bluer blues and greener / grass’ (*Bluesprint* 275) — the latter also a reference to the type of drug trade typically encountered in a port city. Compton’s innovation of the nouns ‘mirror’ and ‘razor’ to an adjective repetition of “razorous” and “mirrorous” to describe Canadian locales and border-guard attitudes, and his use of opaque imagery — ‘sliver’, ‘silver’, ‘sparkle’, ‘rain’ — also remind us that Vancouver is commonly known as the city of glass. In her article “The Intrinsic Potential of Glassness” (2014), Darias-Beautell suggests that glass comes to signify the urban in Vancouver: ‘narcissistic and mirror-like, reflecting light, producing images of the ideal, conceived space’ (84). Darias-Beautell suggests that many works by Vancouver writers construct the city as a place of ‘opacities, shaping urban space as is perceived from a multiplicity of inner

angles, constructing the city as affective ethnoscape' and that the heightened visibility of the city's planes and perspectives increases:

our awareness of the relationship between the largest and the smallest spatial scales by figuring specific locales through the bodies that dwell in, walk through, see or are seen in, touch, or move around them (84).

Furthermore, the influential, cyclical, and palimpsestic modality of tidalectics, despite its anchorage in natural imagery, complements Amy Reddinger's (2009) conception of urban space as '*layered* with both visible and veiled histories, signs, symbols, and experiences' (117). Peter Dickinson ascribes this layering of space more specifically to the urban landscape of Vancouver when he writes that the city 'functions as an important mnemonic device, its architecture a vertical mosaic through which bodies move horizontally, a topography they experience *palimpsestically*' (96, emphasis added). In *Downtown Canada* (2005), Edwards and Ivison ask 'where is this place? What is Vancouver?' concluding that, though it is 'indeed a cosmopolitan North American city... it is also a place that includes the spectre of the wilderness' (207), ascribing to McLuhan's spatial conception of "decentred galaxies" as interfaces rather than oppositions. Indeed, Edwards and Ivison suggest that Vancouver facilitates a fluid movement between city space and wilderness, creating a hybrid arena which challenges 'the urban-wilderness binary' (208). This has repercussions not only for the metanarrative of Canadian wilderness but for the dominant discourse of nordicity, as the 'incorporation of city and wilderness' unsettles 'the ordering of discrete spaces seen in the transparent mapping of nordicity' (208). Edwards and Ivison's argument is echoed in Darias-

Beautell's post-Fryegian declaration that, in contemporary Canada, the wilderness 'is the city' ("Afraid" 342).

In his poems "The Reinventing Wheel" and "Legba, Landed", Compton maps the coordinates of a topography dominated by shifting borders and boundaries that vie to demarcate and fragment Black British Columbian identities. His work both exposes and implodes the ordered zoning of what Darias-Beautell calls an 'affective ethnoscape' (84). Compton's dynamic harnessing of the Legba figure, placing the gatekeeper at the airport, an emblem of the enforcement of national hegemony, reveals the impenetrability of racialised borders monitored by an oppressive white gaze for black subjects in the real world, while at the same time Legba serves to signify communication across the diaspora, beyond borders — at the end of the poem the speaker takes to the sky and flies home. Compton's appeal to grant space for the representation of oblique kinds of blackness within the "decentered galaxies" of diasporic culture, along with the tidalectic intervention of Legba and the opacity of a palimpsestic Vancouver, maps a cityscape where such diasporic interventions and innovations occupy the transnational interstices of glocal culture within the vertical mosaic of the blue-green city.

Clarke argues that northern geographies are whitened out in exclusivist omissions of the presence and influence of black citizens, and that whiteness is naturalised through the pervasive imagery of the whitened landscapes of the "Great White North".¹² The cover of Compton's *After Canaan* uses such imagery to underscore the marginalisation of Black Canadians by featuring a digital reproduction of Hogan's Alley by Stan Douglas. In Douglas' surreal image, the houses and streets of Hogan's Alley are blanketed and blanked-out by snow, devoid

of human figures, but with reminders of their presence: frozen washing strung out on a line, empty chairs and tables in a backyard with what appears to be drinking vessels shared out upon tables with mismatched chairs, as if the snowfall was sudden and scattered a gathering of neighbours. The image is a pictorial recreation of the dismantling of the community in which the Vancouver political elite are synonymous with the snow. Along with Compton's title in large red and white letters, the colours of the Canadian flag, the cover symbolises not just the marginalisation of Black Canadians but the sanctions against the spread — or even existence — of urban black communities in Compton's play on the idea of *promised* land. Compton's title also references 'one of the grand allegories of the diaspora: the flight north' in which 'Canada encoded' became 'the land of salvation'; Compton quotes from Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)¹³ to evidence this connection between the North, freedom, and "psalmic" Canaan (*After* 15). Thus the North is paradoxically and simultaneously conceived as a land of salvation, freedom, and home for diasporized black communities, and a land in which blackness is defamiliarised against a hostile white landscape.

Trauma, Jazz, and Flux: Clarke's Africadian Poetics

Even more overtly than Compton, Clarke's work is suffused with references to mapping and space; the titles of his works, as in his seminal book *Odyssey's Home* (2002) and subsequent *Directions Home* (2012), betray this preoccupation, and he extends the metaphor in each text, subtitling sections as itinerary, embarkation, passport, and divagation. From this privileging of spatial language within the first

pages of each of his influential texts, it can be inferred that Clarke's concerns lie in literary cartographies of Canada. Similarly, Clarke's latest collection of poetry is entitled *Traverse* (2014), a suite of poems written largely in one day, thirty years after Clarke penned his first poem, and modelled on the folk-blues ballad. Thus *Traverse* suggests a movement across time and space as well as bespeaking the verse form in which it is written. Clarke's mappings further invoke the images of migration, drift, and echo in their rhizomatic movements around and beyond Atlantic Canada. Fredericton, the provincial capital of New Brunswick, is an important location in Clarke's literary canon as the site of the July 1949 execution of his cousins, George and Rufus Hamilton, about whom he composed the suite of poetry, *Execution Poems*, and the novel, *George and Rue*. Clarke's intertextual narrative strategies in his cartographies of 'Fredericton — fucking — New Brunswick' (*EP* 32) broadens his project to rewrite the map of Nova Scotia to include 'a city that is outside of — and outcast from — the geographic and imaginary space of Africadia', and which simultaneously and 'implicitly delineates the boundaries of Africadia' (Andrews 41). In Clarke's historiographic fictionalisations, we explore the effect of Fredericton's layered racial histories upon the Hamilton brothers, who form part of Clarke's own ancestry¹⁴ and hail from a shared birthplace of Three Mile Plains, Nova Scotia, offering a palimpsestic cartography of Atlantic Canada.

In her essay "Re-Visioning Fredericton", Jennifer Andrews suggests that the brothers' crime — beating a taxi driver to death with a hammer in January 1949 — 'remains discursively imprinted on the local community; the area of Fredericton where the murder took place, Barker's Point, is still nicknamed Hammertown' (24).

Clarke's depiction of the urban sprawl of Fredericton in his novel *George and Rue* emphasises the liminal positioning of the black community at the edges of the city:

Rive sud was mansions, government, elmed and lilac'd streets. But Eatman Avenue, on the north side of the Saint John River, in Barker's Point, was where most Coloured lived: a place of huts, cops-and-robbers, lumber mills, and railway yards. Here the Ku Klux Klan clucked and conclaveed occasionally. The area was named for Lieutenant Thomas Barker, an ex-Yankee and ex-con who landed in 1783 and built a house with iron rings on the walls to hold slaves (*GR* 86).

Clarke's incarnation of privileged Fredericton evokes the gentrified streets of government buildings and expensive, exclusive, and exclusionary properties, while offering gaps in its lexical mapping through his use of apostrophe in 'lilac'd'. In contrast, Eatman Avenue summons a keen sense of civic abandonment, while its impoverishment is intimated by the juxtaposition of the industrial landscape of the north side of the Saint John River with the perfumed and prestigious promenades of *rive sud*. Furthermore, the appellation 'Eatman Avenue' conjures the stereotype of cannibalism, alluded to as the judge sentences the two brothers: 'These two lusty Negroes *cannibalized* poor Burgundy. The verb is not too strong. One followed the other like a dog' (185). Although no act of cannibalism took place, Clarke's diction demonstrates how blackness becomes a coda for all that is taboo and deviant in the Fredericton courtroom.

In her paper, "Cosmopolitanism and Urban Ethnoscapes in African Canadian Literature" (2011), Ana María Fraile suggests that Clarke's novel, filled with historical data and didactic in style, represents Barker's Point as an urban socio-spatial dialectic to be read 'as a palimpsest, revealing a suppressed history of racist oppression which goes against the metanarrative of an allegedly tolerant and just

nation'.¹⁵ This is evident in Clarke's emphasis on the contemporary threat of racial violence in the glottal progression of a KKK that 'clucked and conclaved occasionally', and the redolent histories of slavery, the trauma of which is cemented by the chains set into the stone foundations of Fredericton. A reading of this palimpsest of geographical positionings and historical suppressions supports Andrews' contention that the brothers:

are destined to die partly because of the location of their crimes. More importantly, their race, their class status, and their geographic positioning at the edge of Fredericton ensure that they will be treated as "other" when put on the stand at the downtown courthouse (36).

Andrews delves further into the textual representation of the geographic dimensions to the brothers' arrest and eventual execution in a shed in the gaol's courtyard. Although the murder is committed in Barker's Point, George and Rue drive across, out of, and back into the city with the body of their victim, Silver Burgundy, in the trunk of the car. Their journey delivers Rue to a card game and George to a brothel, where they spend their respective nights before George finally abandons the car near the scene of the crime, against his brother's instruction. In Clarke's poem "George and Rue: Pure, Virtuous Killers", the brothers' fateful road trip is encapsulated in the line: 'They tooled all night between Fredericton and Saint John with Silver coiled — a void noose — in the trunk' (*EP* 12). Clarke's line economically intimates the murder weapon used by the brothers and the weapon that will end their own lives in the noose formed by Silver's dead body. Hammers and nooses are recurring and dexterous symbols in both *George and Rue* and *Execution Poems*, which serve to foreshadow the violence of the brother's grisly

crime and brutal end. Rue, a frustrated musician, is unable to find and keep a gig playing piano: the narrator tells us that ‘Rue dreamt hammers hitting strings forcefully. His music was hammer hammer hammer hammer hammer hammer hammer, a stammering thud thud thud thud thud’ (97). Some pages later, we learn that ‘Christmas 1948 was hardly Christmas... And there was a hammer on the premises, but no piano’ (*GR* 100). Thus Rue’s recourse to violence is framed by a lack of opportunity, economic disparity, and trauma, while the brothers’ police statement is ‘a script’ that will ‘be pressed into death-sentence paper and then wrung into hangman’s hemp’ (*GR* 165). In an alternative narrative to this ‘embroidered’ script, Rufus writes:

Three white men
are coming to kill us.
Their ties are upside-down nooses.
Their faces hammer breath.
.....
We’ll don a new black skin of flies.

(The gallows swallows you whole:
You wallow inside its hole.) (*GR* 199-200)

In this space of black redefinition, the hammer and noose are imbricated with whiteness, the symbols united in the image of the gallows, erected using those tools. Furthermore, the stereotype of cannibalism is applied to the gallows as the instrument of the white courthouse. In “The Killing”, George and Rue narrate the murder in a call and response pattern, as George asks ‘[c]an we cover up a murder with snow? / With white, frosty roses?’ and Rue responds: ‘The blow that slew Silver came from two centuries back. / It took that much time and agony to turn a whiteman’s whip / into a black man’s hammer’ (*EP* 35). Whilst George considers

attempting to hide his guilt beneath the fallen snow (beneath whiteness), Rue firmly positions the crime as a consequence of slavery and racial persecution, again highlighting the traumatic racial histories and geographies of Canada. The grim reality of Silver's grisly death is invoked viscerally, synaesthetically:

Rue: Iron smell of the hammer mingled with iron smell of blood
and chrome smell of snow and moonlight.

.....
The taxi-driver lies red in the alabaster snow.
His skeleton has taken sick and must be placed in the ground (34).

This depiction appeals to a palette of black, white, and red, which works to cast blackness as a dangerous aberration against the white landscape. The scene of George and Rue's crime is both framed by whiteness (snow) and illuminated by it (moonlight). Clarke offers a blended indexing of rural and urban space as the brothers' traverse the outskirts of the city, while the fallen snow is emblematic of wilderness and imposes an alterity-inducing alabaster landscape that spotlights the act of murder.¹⁶

In an overt reference to the racial terror of lynchings, Clarke writes that Silver's body 'spawned a host of bitter citizens clamouring for two black boys to swing from a beige fake tree' (*GR* 193-194). The author connects this clamour to Rue's music and to press reports of the trial in the city's anticipation of the brothers' death, which is 'in tune with the racket of hammers hitting nails, the crescendo of piano keys — hammers — striking chords and the machine-gun of typewriter hammers striking paper' (*GR* 194). Thus Clarke posits a sonic schema that imbricates music and writing with instruments of death to articulate the

violence of Canada's white cultural hegemony. The symbolic use of the typewriter hammers from Clarke's novel echoes his poem "Identity I", vocalised by Rue:

Rue: My colour is guttural.
I was born in lachrymose air.

My face makes a mess of light:
It's like a black splinter lancing snow.

I'm negative, but positive with a knife.
My instinct? Is to damage someone.

My words collide with walls of fists,
Collapse, my teeth clacking like typewriters (19).

Rue's insistence that his colour is 'guttural' conflates a racial identity defined by sound with the visual, epidermal signifier of his dark skin: his colour is synonymous with sound. The choice of the word 'guttural' strips away language and positions sound inside Rue's body, in his throat, emphasising vocality as a bodily articulation, and in this sense a racialised one. The coordinates he gives for the site of his birth place him in the air, suggesting his disconnection from the land and investing the wet atmosphere of Nova Scotia with melancholic emotion. His admission that his 'instinct? Is to damage someone' is overtly questioned by Clarke's use of punctuation, but is 'in tune' with the related line from the novel in which Fredericton is desirous to see the brothers hang. Additionally, the recurring motif of typewriter 'hammers' in the novel and poem foregrounds both the way the Hamiltons' story has been told and recorded in history and Clarke's own project to fill in, inhabit, and embody the gaps. As the black population of Fredericton is relegated to the edgelands of the cityscape at Barker's Point, written histories have sidelined the violence of Canadian racial histories in favour of the dominant

metanarrative of Canada as a land of tolerance and freedom, thus the social, political, and economic realities of George and Rue's lives are denied them.

In *George and Rue*, Clarke maps the shifting spaces of Africadia, revealing the illusory nature of freedom for Black Canadians in the brothers' rhizomatic movements across whitened northern geographies. Andrews incisively notes that the "noose" of Silver's body in the trunk of the car as the brothers trace the geographic and imaginary boundaries of Africadia:

becomes symbolic of the increasingly tight geographic circle that draws the two brothers in from the suburbs of the capital, taking them to Minto, Saint John, the south side of the river in Fredericton... and Barker's Point before returning them to the downtown core, turning relegation to the periphery into visibility at the centre with the double hanging of the two men (40-41).

Here the noose symbolises the psychogeographic pull and repulsion of the urban terrain in Andrews' positioning of the brothers, *drawn* from the edges of the city to the downtown core, exchanging relegation at the periphery for visibility at the centre. The brothers' circuitous journey on the night of the murder is taken by the judge to be an indication of their mental capacities in a racially inflected assessment as he ponders the 'Kafka-esque spree with the body. But the killers' colour was not immaterial: it made a black crime even blacker' (174). Indeed, the brothers' Kafka-esque journey begins before Silver's death, as George and Rue continually change their given destination — Silver wishes that they 'would settle on a destination. But that Georgie could whistle and manhandle harmonica classically, and his brother, "Rupe" or something like that, was fun — a frothing Atlantic of stories' (119). With their storytelling and musical performances, George and Rue blacken the acoustic space of the taxi cab, while Rue, figured as 'frothing Atlantic', along with George's

circum-atlantic navigations, underscores Black Canadian presence in the Black Atlantic configuration, filling the “gap in the map” Clarke detects in Gilroy’s cultural paradigm.

When George is behind the wheel searching for a place to dump the body, with Rue installed at his card game and Silver in the trunk, he even stops to pick up a Mi’kmaq hitchhiker, who is ‘goin to Fredericton to visit Bliss Carman’s grave’ (147). Carman (1861-1929), a New Brunswick poet, may be used here to signal Canada’s Confederation, and in this way Clarke incorporates the shifting genealogies of New Brunswick’s heritage into the brothers’ psychogeographic excursion, reflecting ‘the changing psychological and cultural landscape of this provincial capital’ (Andrews 25). Carman is also invoked in the poem “Public Enemy”, in which ‘Rue juxtaposes the city’s often unacknowledged roots with its publicly celebrated heroes’ (Andrews 34), as he narrates: ‘Fredtown was put up by Cadians, Coloureds / and hammers’ (*EP* 32). This reference to hammers acknowledges the Hamilton brothers’ crime and inaugurates it as a foundational event in the city’s history.

Against the poetry of Carman, Rue harnesses the lexicon of the African American jazz tradition, and inverts a Fanonian sense of nausea and the recurring symbol of white landscapes when he says: ‘I want to give them all headaches and nausea: / I’ll play fortissimo Ellington, blacken icy whiteness’ (*EP* 32). Riffing on Duke Ellington’s 1933 piece, Andrews suggests that Clarke’s “Ru(d)e Interlude” ‘challenges the quiet iciness of Fredericton with the brash innovation of Ellington’s music and Rue’s own rage, both designed to shatter the city’s veneer’ (34). Here, jazz music affords a portal through which Rue interpellates the spaces of

Fredericton through a blackened soundscape. Rue's attempt to shatter the city's veneer through the modality of jazz reminds us that borderlines can also be conceived as acoustic space, and here Rue supplants Carman's cadences with Ellington's swing, locating an alternative identification in the traditions of African American music. Furthermore, George and Rue's journey can be understood through the lens of McLuhan's decentered galaxies. For example, their movements on the night of the murder thwart attempts at binary structuring in their instability — rather than moving directly from the marginal wilderness of the suburbs to the centred garrison of the downtown core, George and Rue operate within a rhizomatic network in which the murder scene at Barker's Point displaces the downtown courthouse as a privileged spatial locus, and, in fact, in which Fredericton belongs to a larger network of sites, borderlines, and boundaries traversed by the Hamilton brothers from their birth in Three Mile Plains to their execution in Fredericton, indicating a framework of diaspora connectedness that encompasses the shifting histories and geographies of the Black Atlantic.

The Hamilton brothers' Kafka-esque excursion imitates their migrations around Atlantic Canada. Beyond the geographical locus of the brothers' crime and death, the novel depicts the journey of the brothers from rural Three Mile Plains in Nova Scotia to urban Fredericton, New Brunswick, where they drift 'like so much blackstorm sky — / Squinting at frigid, ivory, strait-laced streets' (*EP* 32), in a bildungsroman narrative that traverses the psychogeographic landscape of the eastern Canadian provinces. Additionally George Hamilton spends time in Halifax, Montréal, and various cities around the world as a merchant marine. In her 2011 paper, Fraile describes the Africadian landscape drawn by Clarke as rooted 'in the

consequences of slavery and the African diaspora in the Western hemisphere’, emphasising cultural connections between Black Canadians and African Americans, whilst remaining ‘grounded in a Canadian context of a strong colonial nationalism which pledges allegiance to England and to European values’. Thus, Clarke excavates the Hamilton genealogy, in which he explains that the surname comes from John Hamilton, ‘a hellish master back on hellish St. Simon’s Island in hellish Georgia’, whilst the Hamilton’s arrived in a wave of two thousand migrants who ‘were landed with indifference and plunked on rocky, thorny land (soon laced with infants’ skeletons)’ (*GR* 14). Fraile argues that the novel presents readers with European-Canadian and African-Canadian ethnoscares which are ‘shaped by contending global and local forces that are best played out in the city’; as such, *George and Rue* delineates the ‘intersecting thrusts of globalisation, nationalism, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, [and] transnationalism’ at work in the first half of the twentieth century.

Fraile uses the term ‘ethnoscape’ to describe a landscape of group identity as expressed by social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990). By their very nature, ethnoscares refer to people in flux, which accords with Fraile’s assessment of Clarke’s Black Canadian characters as ‘on the move’, propelled by their positionality between “glocalities”, and ‘drawn to the city in an attempt to embrace dominant society’s ethos and benefits’. Fraile further harnesses Appadurai’s work, specifically his development of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1982), to posit the creation and projection of imagined *worlds* which serve as a tool for the marginalised to challenge and subvert the dominant narratives they are surrounded by. In *George and Rue*, the city of Montréal provides George and Rue’s mother,

Cynthy, with an escapist vision with which to contrast her impoverished life with her violent husband, Asa. Cynthy, who is described in the novel as ‘part Mi’kmaq Negress’ (5), is able to build an imagined ethnoscape situated in ‘fabulous Montréal, where style was brilliant, and where Coloured people could live posh — even if they had to speak French’ (*GR* 18), a destination she has never physically visited. Instead, she is left to construct Montréal ‘from movie magazines and cousins’:

What was Montréal? Her Harlem, her Heaven... It was American cigarettes — caramel and tarty — and gangster *argot* and *panache*. It was elegant *café*-coloured legs and Ellington-like *café-au-lait* faces... Montréal was frontier Paris, a Habitant Manhattan (20).

The bluesy, blackened narrative voice constructs Montréal within a transnational spatial configuration in which the city is not only compared to but *is* a simultaneous incarnation of both Paris and New York. Fraile explains that ‘Cynthy imagines Montréal as a countersetting of her own place in rural Three Mile Plains, a hybrid frontier between the elegance of urban Paris and the urban hip modernity of the US Manhattan’. Furthermore, the sense of transnationalism invoked in Cynthy’s hybrid frontier is reinforced by Clarke’s reference to ‘movie magazines and cousins’, a nod to American influences. Fraile describes the popular media as both American and ‘somehow international’, and this blended space perpetuates Montréal as a simulacrum for Cynthy, enabling her employment of an imagined ethnoscape. Ellington’s jazz sounds are again invoked in this rendering of international Montréal, in an evocation of what Winfried Siemerling identifies as ‘black jazz as a community-specific and culturally rooted yet cross-culturally receptive and

influential matrix'; in a 'reimagining of the multiple emotional and imaginary geographies that constitute Montréal's history... jazz is a visible and audible sign' of the palimpsestic, diasporic communities which are 'integral to Montréal and to Canadian culture' (212).¹⁷ By harnessing a jazz aesthetic in the rendering of Montréal, Clarke offers an alternative identity to Cynthy, who names her son after a Montréal nightclub, Rufus' Paradise. Indeed, it is as though Rufus is born of Cynthy and her dream of Montréal, but she is disappointed when he is '[t]oo much like his papa' and contracts his name to Rue, signalling her regret (20). Ultimately, Cynthy's attempts to enact pieces of her Montréal dream do not help her to survive the hardships of life in Three Mile Plains and in fact put them into stark relief: her fantasies 'foundered on the reality of her gorgeous tan hands scouring a white porcelain toilet to a champagne gleam' (*GR* 51); she dies of a heart attack whilst working as a domestic in Windsor, having never seen Montréal.

The black presence in Clarke's Montréal unsettles the Canadian foundational narrative, reflected in the descriptions of the city focalised by George: 'that Paris of the Saint Lawrence: Montréal. That ex-fur-trade, beaver-pelt metropolis boasted Coloured bars, Coloured dancers, brown-sugar beauties, and brown-sugar dandies' (78). Fraile emphasises that despite George's seemingly admiring gaze, 'these are spaces of segregation and discrimination rather than inclusiveness, which incite him to petty theft'. After three months in a Montréal prison, George briefly searches for work on the docks in Halifax, but encounters preferential treatment towards white men for post-war employment opportunities. Upon the pages of *George and Rue*, 'colonial globalisation is inscribed in the Canadian cities of Montréal, Halifax, and Fredericton in their varying placements', in

their monuments, architecture, and infrastructure, the operation of city streets, distribution of neighbourhoods, and access to opportunity, wealth, and well-being (Fraile). In Halifax, George contemplates a map of Canada that covers a wall at the Seamen's Union Hall, 'squinting especially at the rose-coloured Maritimes. But he'd had enough of Nova Scotia, and he couldn't bear the idea of little flinty, splinter-sized Prince Edward Island' (84). George also rules out a return to Montréal, which is 'a burgh of cops and jail' (84). The gigantic map of Canada represents the "'freedom" of movement which creates the illusion of opportunity', yet each of George's global and national trajectories end in arrest and imprisonment (for desertion and theft), and his sentences grow ominously harsher with each arrest (Fraile). George's early encounters with the authorities and periods of imprisonment serve to foreshadow the treatment the brothers will later receive at the downtown Fredericton courthouse. George's only brief period of stability occurs in Fredericton, where he moves in with Blondola, the young woman he marries in Windsor. Initially, George is respected by his neighbours and Blondola views him as 'a living cosmopolitan', who had seen Buckingham Palace and 'the rubble of the House of Commons. He could describe for her places and experiences she had only heard about on the radio' (84). Blondola's parents, though unhappy with the match, take heart in the fact that he had been to London and could speak French, although the reader knows that in London George had seen 'sweet fuck-all' and the French phrases he did know had been learned in a Montréal prison (75). Montréal 'provides George with a forged identity' (Fraile); this forged identity allows him to join the merchant marines, but the fraudulence at the root of this brief period of stability in Fredericton compounds its fleeting nature — like his

sojourns in London and Montréal, George's stint in Fredericton will end in imprisonment and then death.

In his tracing of George's journey, Clarke highlights prejudice and racial violence as the forces propelling his movement from province to province, revealing the notion of "freedom" to be both elusive and illusory. This pattern supports Fraile's contention that 'Clarke's transnational and constantly shifting black characters seem to have the right to depart, but not the right to arrive somewhere', in accordance with Brathwaite's assessment of 'the seemingly / endless / purgatorial / experience / of black / people' ("Dream" 132). Clarke's blackened, jazz-inflected cartographies consistently foreground the trauma of black experience as the Hamilton brothers traverse whitened-out Canadian landscapes. The traumatic register of George and Rue's story is achieved through Clarke's employment of visual and sonic schemas exemplified by the hammers and nooses that colonise the novel and suite of poems dedicated to the memory of his cousins. Hammers and nooses are emblematic of the construction of George and Rue's story through experiences of racial violence that encircle and encode them, like the imbricated imagery of typewriter keys and the weaving of hangman's hemp. Clarke's text inhabits the gaps of their embroidered stories as well as the "gap in the map" of the rose-coloured Maritimes (again signalling the denial of violent racial histories), inscribing the trauma of the Black Atlantic into Canadian geographies, and incorporating the edgelands in his nation narration, thus disrupting any singular, homogenised understanding of *Canadianité*. The decentred detours and networks inscribed into the narrative by the Hamilton brothers'

movements delineate the borderlines of Africadia, while Clarke highlights their porousness through the motifs of trauma, jazz, and flux.

Roots and Routes: Provinces of Imagination

Clarke's Canadian territories are traced with racialised boundaries that control and compel the movements of the Hamilton brothers in their perpetual search for a home-place. Indeed, the 'city as lived by [Clarke's] black characters... reveals a heavily territorialized society along the lines of race totally at odds with the current fallacy of the postracial society' (Fraile, "Cosmopolitanism"). In her article "When Race Does Not Matter, "except to everyone else"" (2012), Fraile traces the emergence of postracial discourse to the publication of Gilroy's *Against Race*, and the historic US election of Barack Obama. Fraile contextualises this for the Canadian experience with her discussion of Pierre Trudeau's liberal visions of a "colour-blind" society, which 'culminated with the State's adoption of multiculturalism as a defining principle of Canadian society and national identity, [and] which emphasized ethnicity over race' (78).¹⁸ Despite these discursive and political turns, racism, social injustice, and economic imbalance remain endemic in North American cultures, and Fraile posits that the 'dangers and contradictions of Canadian liberalism's professed colour-blindness' can be summarised by Compton's contention that 'to support the view that "race doesn't matter" neutralizes any attempt on the part of the racialized subject to contest racism' (Fraile 84). In an interview published in *West Coast Line* (2002), Compton observes that white

Canadians control definitions of blackness and lack understanding of “the colour metaphor”:

unless you are literally black-skinned... they have no word for what you are, and are likely to tell you “race doesn’t matter,” which, if you allow it, will leave you absolutely powerless and abject (135).

In his poem “Declaration of the Halffrican Nation”, which foregrounds black experience from a mixed race subjectivity, Compton unsettles the idea of a fixed Canadian identity and restores the absent black presence in a black skin/white masks Fanonic invocation:

in canada, I really couldn’t
begin to guess our numbers crunching
through the snow on shoes of woven
kola. black hippies; black punk rockers;
black goths with white masks *literally*
multiply like flesh-eating bacteria on the west coast (*Performance* 15-16)

Clarke reads the line ‘black goths with white masks *literally*’ as referring to snow falling upon black skin in an analysis to which Compton directs his readers for ‘the most complete reading of this poem to date’ (*After* 220). What is also interesting about Compton’s garnering of the “goth” aesthetic, along with designations such as “hippies” and “punk rockers”, is that it portrays a multiplicity of identities and ideologies available to Black Canadians on the West Coast. The cultural identities designated by Compton are popularly perceived as subversive ones, suggesting perhaps a revolutionary potential in such formations. The comparison of this proliferation to ‘flesh-eating bacteria’ repeats the imagery of inversion introduced in the fifth line of the poem, when the speaker notes that ‘co / conuts get eaten

from the inside, the sweetness / and light from the milk and the flesh, not / the
 husk, so skull-like' (15). The following lines further develop Compton's refrain:

racism

is a disease, the ministry decrees to me in my bus seat
 from an ad, and I could add
 that this is just the latest stage in race management. canada all
 in a rush to recruit more brown whites; entre-
 preneurs only, no more slaves or railroad builders (16)

While rendering racism as a disease connects the idea of 'flesh-eating bacteria' to racial hostilities as well as to what Compton describes as 'the latest stage in race management', Compton also references sanctions against black immigration and historical reasons for black migration to Canada, supporting a more sinister interpretation of Canada's "recruitment" of black citizens according to the country's needs: to an underclass of slaves, to a working class of railway builders (and porters), to an educated, entrepreneurial middle class. Compton's vantage point from his bus seat echoes Frantz Fanon's positioning in his widely anthologised essay "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" (1952), where he describes being "fixed" by a white child travelling on a train, who shouts "Look, a Negro!" (89). Compton's rendering exposes the 'crevices of institutional Canadian multiculturalism' that would promote a fixed notion of Canadian identity 'through the experience of the shifting, ambiguous, liminal, and transnational positionality of mixed race subjectivity' (Fraile 77). Clarke calls this excavation of mixed race subjectivity as liminal space "zebra poetics" in his essay on Canadian biraciality in *Odysseys Home*. Fraile notes that some writers have 'adopted the derogatory metaphor of the zebra to designate their particular poetics articulating the dual black-and-white (or

multiple) racial status they reclaim for themselves' (101), as in Black Canadian writer Lawrence Hill's autobiographical "Zebra: Growing Up Black and White in Canada" (1994). Fraile advances that zebra poetics 'unveil the processes of racialization and racism... as well as the fallacy of the discourses sustaining the beginning of a post-racial, colour-blind, and just era' (77). Compton's poem articulates the sense of in-betweenness intended by the zebra metaphor in that his work is punctured with halves and schisms, affirming a sense of hyphenated identity, in lines such as 'my grammar teacher said a semi- / colon is just a gutless colon; yellow' and 'casting backward glances side- / ways, askance processions of belonging, possession' (15). These lines, with their references to colour, authority, language, visibility, and communal identities, succinctly express a state of in-betweenness, but from external, rather than internal forces — teachers, mirrors, and people 'saying hello to you cause / you are brown / as we pass' (15), in an invocation of Anderson's imagined communities and an innovation on the notion of 'passing', in this case for black rather than white (16). Compton emphasises this with poetic form, as the hyphenated words "semi-colon" and "side-ways" are enjambed at the core, a breath between them: breath is inhaled into the lungs in that space between halves, whilst the word "colon" is followed by a half-measure semi-colon, cowardice associated with "yellowness" in common parlance.

Compton's closing line suggests that death is a possible outcome of the struggle to be 'an agreed-upon proper noun' (16), and the title of the poem offers "Halfrican" as a balm to the problem of society having 'no word for what you are' ("Epic" 135). Compton characterises this struggle as the 'desire for recognition, representation, and cultural clarity', as he writes in a retrospective reflection on the poem, which

was written when he was twenty-four years old. Compton offers an explanation for his coining of the term “halffrican”:

The term “halffrican,” as I use it, is facetious, a satirical tonic for the problem of a disunified identity... positioned as the emblem of the desire for recognition, representation, and cultural clarity. At the time, I wanted both the ease of identity that monoracial people seem to have, yet distrusted it as a false goal. Today, I would go further and advocate a more specific defence of racial complication (*After* 217).

Compton’s promotion of racial complication as opposed to ‘the ease’ of a seemingly fixed “monoracial” identity highlights the way in which the ‘in-betweenness of African Canadian mixed race subjectivity unsettles the discourse not only on Canadian cultural nationalism but also on black nationalism’ (Fraile 77). Compton uses black cultural resources from either side of the Canadian-US border, and the poem acknowledges American influences, as when he references depictions of African Americans on television: ‘there’s so many on screen a white acquaintance of mine / thought the us population was half / black!’ — again articulating hyphenated identities in this casting of Americans as “half black”. For Compton, this ‘signifies / an inexorable triumph of mlk’s dream’ (*Performance* 15). Aside from the title and the self-signifying ‘I’, Compton’s poem is entirely in lowercase letters. In these lines, this facet of the poem means that the ‘us’ of the United States can also be read as a unifying statement: ‘us’, as in black North American populations. The lack of capitals in the reference to Martin Luther King cause the reader to subvocalise the word as *m(i)lk*, incorporating Martin Luther King and his philosophies into what Clarke calls the “zebra poetics” of the poem: Compton’s lack

of capitals allows for a multiplicity of additional meanings and associations. Later, Compton asks ‘is the mention / of bullets too american?’ before he continues:

the best way
 anyone ever referred to me as mixed-race was a jamaican
 woman who said, *I noticed you’re touched*. to
 me sounded like she meant by the hand of god
 (or the god of hands), and not the tar brush. made me
 feel like a motherless child a long, long way
 from my home (16).

Here, Compton incorporates lyrics from the traditional African American spiritual performed and adapted by icons such as Mahalia Jackson, Louis Armstrong, Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, and Lena Horne. Although Compton writes that he is ‘agnostic about the spirituals — that golden inheritance’ (*After 17*), his utilisation of this spiritual tradition strengthens his articulation of the experience in which the colour of his skin triggers recognition in the Jamaican woman; his reference to the hand of god in this context foreshadows his tapping into the resource of the spiritual. Compton uses this refrain paradoxically: despite the content of the lyrics (and the omission of the word “sometimes”), which suggests displacement and loss, in accessing the resource of the spiritual and interpreting the Jamaican woman’s observation positively, Compton’s articulation is one of *belonging* to the diaspora in which the Jamaican woman becomes a proxy for the absent mother.

The idea of a “zebra” consciousness is something that Clarke uses to discuss Hill’s *Any Known Blood* (1997), a novel often compared to Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1976), in which the protagonist, Cane V, can pass for ‘multiple, non-black identities’ (*Odysseys* 220). Cane V is the fifth generation of men who share the same name, Langston Cane. Walcott points out that Hill’s act of naming draws the Harlem

Renaissance into the genealogies of the Cane family, referencing both Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer's 1923 novel. Describing this as an indication of Hill's 'border crossing sensibilities', Walcott affirms that such 'intertextual dialogue' between contemporary Black Canadian and African American literatures and histories 'is crucial to black literature of the North' and that 'it is impossible to make sense of some aspects of black Canadian history' without a consideration of the influences and proximities of the United States (67).¹⁹ Perhaps more important is the allusion to the US "one drop rule" inherent in Hill's title, which is included as an epigraph to the novel. A second epigraph from Hughes' poem "Cross" amplifies a sense of social exclusion, argues Fraile, because in it the 'mixed race subject [is] excluded not just from the white but also from the black world, "Being neither white nor black."' (81). Clarke sets Hill's embrace of his dual-heritage identity against Frantz Fanon's thesis in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1965), in which he 'branded the mixed-race black as suspect... a ready *collaborateur* with white supremacy' the voice of 'self-hatred and Negrophobia' (*Odysseys* 213). Instead, Hill:

spurns claims that his chosen identity may camouflage the desire surging — to cite Fanon — 'across the zebra striping of my mind... to be suddenly *white*' (*Black* 63). Rather, Hill's zebra metaphor is, for him, as *avant-garde* as the black panther *sign* was for *that* party of urban African-American Maoists in the late 1960s (221).

Clarke claims that Compton follows Hill in 'questioning all efforts to impose a uniform understanding of *blackness* — or even of *race*' — and in espousing a "zebra' sensibility', a sensibility Clarke suggests is more prevalent in writers from the Canadian Prairies and the West Coast (222). For example, in a riff on

“Motherless Child”, Compton references Fanon before making a clarion call to ‘my fellow mixed sisters and brothers’:

sometimes I feel like frantz fanon’s ghost
is kickin back with a coke and rum having
a good chuckle at all this, stirring in the tears, his work
done, pounding with the spirits. oh, all
my fellow mixed sisters and brothers let us mount
an offensive for our state (*Performance* 16).

In isolating the line ‘sometimes I feel like frantz fanon’s ghost’ from its continuation ‘is kickin back’, the speaker of Compton’s poem rewrites the lyric so that Fanon’s ghost is a surrogate for the motherless child. Compton’s artful play on words characterises the speaker as a paler version of Fanon, or perhaps a Fanon that is ‘suddenly *white*’, complicating any singular view of black-white subjectivities. Clarke explains the flourishing of a “zebra” sensibility in Western Canada through the ‘socio-geographical context’ of isolation from larger and more established black communities in Central and Atlantic Canada, which ‘provokes, perhaps, their interrogation of racial identity’ (222). Clarke celebrates Compton’s poem, writing that it ‘indulges in the pleasures of the indefinite... This wonderful, sprawling free-verse poem executes a dance across consciousness, one that explodes black and white definitions’ (229-230) and, he continues, Compton ‘fulfils Fanon’s ‘ultime prière’ [final prayer] at the conclusion of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, ‘O mon corps, fais de moi toujours un home qui interroge!’ (190; 230) [O my body, make of me always a man who questions]. Indeed the verse is populated with questions which belie the poem’s opening statement:

hazel’s so definitive. is the window

half open or half closed? is a black
 rose natural? is it indigenous to this
 coast? (15)

These lines foreground a sense of in-betweenness and sets up the poem as an answer to the question of the “natural” presence of black people in Canada, particularly on the West Coast. Clarke argues that the speaker’s status ‘because it is open to question, is richly, rewardingly, *open*’, noting that the poem closes without a full stop (231). The incompleteness suggested by the lack of a period at the end of Compton’s poem underscores a sense that identity is both unfixed and in process. Although the zebra metaphor is deployed as a reclamation and repurposing of a derogatory term, as a symbol it fails to competently articulate liminal and hybrid identities: rather than exploding black and white definitions, it implies oscillation. Indeed, of the black and white metaphor, Compton states that ‘the revolution I want is to stop thinking in that binary’ (“Reinventing”).²⁰ Zebra stripes are sequenced, suggesting a stable dichotomy, whereas subjects *move*, they are transitory and transitional. Thus the zebra metaphor is incompatible with the unfixed conception of identity in Compton’s “Declaration”. Like the drifting, echo, and migration of subjects in “The Lost Island”, identities are in flux, not the stable alternation between states implicated in the portioned borderlines of the zebra stripe, but blended, porous, and in process.

In positing the neologism “Halfrican”, Compton attempts to answer the desire for representation by prompting a renewed, alternative language to articulate mixed race subjectivity. Similarly, Compton impresses the significance of recovering local black history, which ‘is no different from the greater, global,

diasporic urge. We seek to ease the anxiety of disruption and erasure' (*After* 107). This anxiety is the subject of Compton's long poem "Rune", about the memory of Hogan's Alley; writing in 2010 about the 2004 publication, Compton reflects that he approached 'the problem of remembering Hogan's Alley not through realistic representation but through more elliptical means' and that, rather than wanting to recreate the historical place, he was more interested in 'the *desire* to remember' (112). Many of Compton's creations incorporated in this long poem are imagined historical artefacts, such as staged photographs, newspaper articles, and interviews with fictional residents, 'semi-hoaxes' based on real-life corollaries (113). In this way, it can be argued that, as in the title of his *After Canaan* essay "Seven Routes to Hogan's Alley and Vancouver's Black Community", Compton carves a route to Hogan's Alley from the 'images of my own latent romantic pseudo-black-nationalist desires' (115). Photographic elements of Compton's poem were created with the help of visual artist Mykol Knight; hand-painted signs, industrial tape, and buildings that double as Compton's imaginary sites. When questioned by a local man about 'what we were doing to his garage', Compton and Knight explained that they were making poetry, a kinesthetic conception of the art form (116). Compton is aware that some readers may miss the disclaimer in his book about these non-historical elements and 'read the "Landmarks" as actual', and suggests that such a misreading will 'allegorize the ontological feelings' of a lost history, as readers feel 'history disappear from them... a process of reading that imitates... the sense of incredulity that our city seems to associate with its improbably black populace' (117).

Compton's project foregrounds both 'cultural memorialization as a representational act' (117) and the multimodal poetic practice through which Compton invents new

geographies, whether based on the actual or the legendary, as in his palimpsestic depiction of Pauline Johnson Island in *The Outer Harbour*.

In *After Canaan*, Compton succinctly expresses the condition of Black Canadian experience as ‘the appendix of the epic and the echo of the odyssey’ (16). His desire to remember Hogan’s Alley can be understood as an attempt to counteract the exclusion of Black Canada from discourses of the African diaspora, as well as the tendency for British Columbia to be excluded from the movement to ground black identities in Canadian soil. The strength of Clarke’s identification as Africadian, and his sense of rootedness in Three Mile Plains, does not negate a connection to the African diaspora; although Clarke’s ‘long-standing support for... conservative nationalism’ is well known (MacLeod 249), the manifesto he outlines in *Odyssey’s Home* challenges Walcott’s accusation of a lack of concern with diaspora networks. While he insists that ‘Halifax is not Harlem or Havana or Haiti’, Clarke borrows from Peter Hudson to articulate his aim to counter ‘the shallow readings of black writing by mapping the literary topos of Canada as a province of the African diaspora and exploring the space of African Canadian literature as a province of the imagination’ (qtd. in *Odysseys* 11). What is interesting here is Clarke’s approval not only of Hudson’s diasporic sensibilities, but of the idea of Black Canadian literature as simultaneously a province of imagination, a concept Alexander MacLeod explores in his analysis of Clarke’s work. MacLeod argues that Clarke’s ‘efforts to establish an “Africadian” literary canon transgress the normal boundaries between real and imagined social space’ (228). In an interview with Maureen Moynagh, Clarke calls for an effort to “rename”, “reorder”, and “rethink”

(77) the ‘imagined space of his nation’ in a ‘direct assault on the doctrine of environmental determinism’ (MacLeod 246). MacLeod argues that:

Unlike traditional regionalist writers, it cannot be said that George Elliott Clarke comes *from* Africadia... Ultimately, it should be argued that Clarke is *going* to Africadia... Clarke’s writing is devoted to a region that did not exist in the real world before he gave it a name and initiated the slow process of its creation (244).

MacLeod’s observation that Clarke is *going* to Africadia is reminiscent of Compton’s excavation of a route *to* Hogan’s Alley in *After Canaan*; Compton’s play on the words “route” and “root” cannot be overlooked. Similarly, Clarke’s desire for a home-place has its counterpart in Compton’s interest in the desire to remember — each is motivated by a profound sense of erasure and elision. This motivation also inflects their cultural roles as anthologists; in a public conversation with Compton, Clarke acknowledges that:

there is a distinctive black BC school: now that you have put out *Bluesprint*, we all know there is one now. And whether it existed before or not, it does exist now. That is one of the functions of an anthology, to say “this is who we are.” (McNeilly 62)

In framing Clarke and Compton’s mapping of the routes *to* Africadia and Hogan’s Alley respectively, each author’s work acts as a portal for alternate interpellation, and asserts the right of Black Canadians to belong, not just depart. Clarke and Compton both retrieve histories of denied violences and contest a limited critical allowance for Canadian blackness. As part of their endeavours, Clarke and Compton transcend traditional modes of nation narration and multiply blended

spaces for cultural expression in their poetry and prose, their cultural activism and critical projects.

Compton translates the inheritances of the African diaspora to forge a Black Pacific node of transnational blackness — his Pauline Johnson Island is a stage where the terrors and tensions of colonialism are played out in a modern socio-political landscape. The ecological succession of the island gives way to a palimpsest of human colonisation and urban redevelopment, becoming a place of imprisonment and death for a population of migrants who can “wink” through portals in space, and of ghosts and postbody composites. The fractal patterning of fractured, composite identities and shape-shifting transmutations of the island, and, the later stories indicate, Vancouver, suggests a blended wild and urban space as well as a blending of body and postbody states, revealing the processes of nation and culture to be as in flux, porous, and blended as the instabilities and mutability of the island itself. Similarly, in Compton’s poems, diaspora in Canada is characterised by crossings and palimpsests that point to the necessary transgression of borders between culture, nation, and geographies to perform radical, multiple experiments of identity. Compton seeks a foundational narrative of presence in the psychogeographic terrain of Vancouver, a topography experienced palimpsestically (Dickinson 96): his use of sonic and visual schemas in “The Reinventing Wheel” explicate the acoustic space of McLuhan’s decentred galaxies through stutter, crackle, and metronomic oscillations, and propose a dynamic interface of connectedness across multiple borders, rather than sets of binary oppositions. The borderline is thus conceived as the resonant interval, while

place is open and porous, allowing for fluid movement and communication through gaps and detours, like the interstitial portal marked by Legba's *vévé*.

In his project to rewrite the histories and geographies of Atlantic Canada through a jazz-inflected cartography delineated by subjects in flux, Clarke recognises and relates the trauma of black experience in an alterity-inducing white landscape. In his work, Montréal, Halifax, Fredericton, and their edgelands, all belong to a larger network of sites, borderlines and boundaries in the shifting geographies and histories of the Black Atlantic. "Hammertown" displaces downtown Fredericton as the centre of Clarke's intertextual narrative, becoming the resonant interval for the expression and audition of traumatic racial violences. The coiled noose that haunts the works signifies the pull and repulsion of an urban terrain dominated by white racial hegemony, while Clarke's sonicscape is instituted through the hammering of piano and typewriter keys as the trauma of race in Atlantic Canada is recorded, then rewritten. Jazz offers a touchstone of alternate interpellation, signified by the use of Ellington as a cipher in and against the icy wilderness of Canadian cultural landscapes and climates. The roots of and routes through such alternative interpellations, subjectivities, and spaces establish an interval for border crossing conceptions of identity, nation, culture, and geographies, and imprint a palimpsestic understanding of overlapping diasporas, disrupting the homogeneity of imposed dominant metanarratives of race and landscape in Canada.

Conclusions

But there is nothing to beat what the City can make of a nightsky. It can empty itself of surface, and more like the ocean than the ocean itself, go deep, starless.

— Toni Morrison, *Jazz*

Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* adduces the motif of ships traversing the ocean in a paradigm that memorialises the Crossing as well as recognising the existence of shared and hybrid cultural formations that transcend national borders. In his tidalectics, Kamau Brathwaite invests diaspora with the ocean itself, with the motion of the tides, implying a palimpsestic and rhythmic chronotope that is implicative of overlapping diasporas in the image of the wave. Brent Hayes Edwards expresses diaspora through the experience of the body, through *décalage*, and, like Gilroy and Brathwaite, his framework hinges on kinesis and functions at a site of juncture.¹ This juncture recalls the liminal space of the ocean in the gap between Africa and diasporic sites in the Western Hemisphere; the shifting, ephemeral locus at which the sea meets land; and spaces both of linkage and of separation that evoke anatomical articulation. As well as working with these configurations, this study has engaged with Canadian scholarship, such as the work of R. Murray Schafer and Marshall McLuhan, whose decentred galaxies imagistically shift the focus from oceanic and bodily frameworks to a constellation that directs our gaze to points of reference in the sky — the same sky that the Amerindian people used to navigate the oceans to reach the Caribbean islands (Chamberlin). This nautical sense of navigation returns us to Gilroy's metaphor of the sea voyage,

but places emphasis on the human interpretation of environment — sky, sea, and landscape — involved in mapping. These cartographic sites are constructed in a blended, rather than an oppositional relation; in the city, the vertical mosaic of the skyline projects into the space above us, shaping our field of perception, whilst urban design produces junctures in the cityscape that direct and interrupt our movements and our relationship to the landscape.

In *Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison figures the birth of the female ancestor through a narrative blending of the slaveship, the grave, and the womb in her remarkable chapter from the perspective of Sethe's phantom daughter, whilst Nikki Giovanni foregrounds the legacy of the interior sounds of the slaveship in the sonorities of women of the African diaspora. Morrison and Giovanni thus invest the African Atlantic with the evocative auralities of the gospel hum and frame this as a sonic inheritance traceable in the communion of women. In *The Price of the Ticket* (1985), James Baldwin imbues New York's streets with the violence and depth of the sea in a schema that recalls Gaston Bachelard's description of the noise of the city as an 'ocean roar' (*Poetics* 28). But when Schafer describes the rapidly evolving soundscape of our cities, he insists on sky-sounds because they 'dominate the next movement of our world symphony', noting that 'any number of thunderous things can happen in the sky over our heads' (59). Schafer portions the stages of human history through sound, from the steam engine to the cracking of whips, commenting of the contemporary period: 'The whole world is an airport' (61-62). Schafer's sky-sounds may also be adapted to articulate the transmission of sound waves (including the human voice) through air. In her poem "The African All of It", Tanya Evanson implies transmission in the line '[b]e it air or cuneiform I am

listening' (147), emphasising aural receptivity to sounds communicated through air (or breath). Further developing this link between sound and air with kinesis, Schafer reminds us that vibration and sound are inherently imbricated, as '[a]nything in our world that moves vibrates air' and, over a certain threshold, this vibration is heard as sound (5).² Although these models are not posited as replacements or appendices for understanding the experience of the African diaspora, a consideration of the lived environment enhances our analyses of the evolving cultural production of diasporized communities who negotiate the layered cityscape and its sounds, as well as the borderlines of nation, region, and communal belonging, all of which have implications for identity.

"Jazz-Shaped Bodies" opens at the skyline of Baldwin's New York texts, employing a psychogeographic framework to elucidate the tyranny of the cityscape in Baldwin's literary canon. Affording this space to Baldwin allows for an engagement with the fiction and nonfiction work of this prolific African American writer at a crucial site in the nexus of black transnational culture. Baldwin's intimate connection to Harlem offers a critical insight that complements the deployment of a psychogeographic lens, which is focused here on works such as Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958), Guy Debord's "Theory of the *Dérive*" (1958), and is tacitly informed by Frantz Fanon's foundational essay "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" (1952). These texts cohere around the movement of the body through city space, whilst Baldwin's accounts of life in the city textualise the experience of walking the city for the black inhabitants of New York. Integrating readings from Baldwin Studies with spatial theory in my analysis of works across the Baldwin

canon (rather than focusing on one text or distinct era or genre of his writings) has been enormously productive, especially in my discussion of the evolution of dragons as symbolic of racial tyranny in the United States, and Baldwin's committed, sometimes unpopular, depictions of Harlem.

In Baldwin's work, the body and the city are the loci where the operations of American power structures such as capitalism, patriarchy, and white racial hegemony are produced and reproduced. In *Another Country* (1962), the body of Rufus, Baldwin's black *flâneur*, is degraded, defamiliarised, and destined to become the 'black corpse floating in the national psyche' (Leeming 201). His experiences navigating the socio-spatial dialectic of the city initiate this process of abjection; frenetically crisscrossing the border between uptown and downtown New York, Rufus' body is 'clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law' (De Certeau 92). Rufus is directed to the George Washington Bridge, 'built to honor the father of his country' (77), by the animate agency and rhythms of the urban scene. As he negotiates the layered racial and gendered histories inscribed into New York's streets, signals, and monuments, Rufus' movements are syncopated by the synaesthetic beat that controls his experience of time and space in the city. This metaphor of the beat exemplifies the sonic, visual, and kinetic modalities through which Baldwin renders the experience of the black walker of the city. Although Rufus dies at the end of the first chapter of the novel, his presence is 'at the source of all the relationships in *Another Country*' (Leeming 201), and this presence haunts the novel's remaining parts and chapters, his sister Ida, and his friends and former lovers, Vivaldo, Eric, and Cass, who must negotiate the spectre of Rufus through the disembodied voice of Bessie Smith and

psychosexual episodes which enact Rufus' death by drowning. Thus Baldwin proposes that Rufus' absence *resonates* and has implications for others who share the city.

Baldwin's essay "Fifth Avenue, Uptown" (1960) is equally unflinching in its portrayal of the lived experience of the black inhabitants of the city, presenting ghetto, rather than mythical, Harlem. Although some critics detect a lack of hope in Baldwin's depictions of life in Harlem, his wider project articulates the power of African Americans to reinscribe and deborder urban space. As *Another Country* implies the power of sonic intervention, Baldwin's essay "The Price of the Ticket" portrays Beauford Delaney's Greenwich Village apartment, where 'the bond of the "unusual door"' between writer and artist is crystallised through the sonority of spirituals, jazz, and the blues, the liminal doorway functioning as threshold to a shifting, alternative landscape (Leeming 36). The depiction of Delaney's doorway as a transportive and transformative portal exemplifies how Baldwin's intimate cartographies demonstrate possibilities for the black urban subject. These possibilities not only reside in the black community, flourishing in the artistic and cultural production of Black New York, seen, for example, in Baldwin's own friendship with Delaney, but in the reclamation and production of space that this allows.

The study develops by harnessing posthumanist thought to interrogate the consequences of sound technologies for the production of space and the construction of black identity formations. Chapter two traces the "sounding line" from Amiri Baraka's Alabama setting to Wayde Compton's Vancouver, mapping American and Canadian topographies through the sonic modality of vibration and

echo (Compton, *Bluesprint* 14). The emerging central concern here is the question of what happens to the body when the voice is severed from a phenomenology of physical presence. This notion of the postbody soundscape pervades each examined text to reveal a disjunctive effect on temporal and spatial boundaries, in which auralities seep through fissures in space and time. This can be traced, for example, in the jazz sounds scored into vinyl — a spatial, temporal, and sonic mapping that is emulated in the textual terrain of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Esi Edugyan's *Half Blood Blues* (2011). Edugyan inherits Ellison's vision of Louis Armstrong and exploits this 'evocation of African American identity as a time-bending, jazz-shaped invisibility' (Pinkerton 187). Edugyan's focus on temporal slippage, fissures, gaps, and spaces in the urban landscape attests to the subversive potential and transformative power of jazz.

Gaston Bachelard and Michel Serres' writings on time further our understanding of how this sonic versatility is achieved temporally; while Bachelard organises time into gaps and instants, Serres allows us to view time as a mapping and a 'percolation' of past and future (Pacenza 66). Each of these theories allows us to envision temporality as porous and as portal. Like Baldwin's unusual door invested with sonority, sonic vibration becomes a threshold for the movement of the postbody through spatial and temporal barriers, seen in the aural memorials to Rufus and in the A-train that tatters time in Baldwin's *Another Country*. This postbody poetic can also be traced in the sonic vibrations of sorrow that mechanise and fuel Baraka's time machine, and in Ellison's kinetic jazz beat, which enables slippage through temporal grooves compatible with Bachelard's notion of the essential discontinuity of time. This vibrating, sonically-powered postbody poetic

also extends to Toni Cade Bambara's explication of the sounding line of interconnection between Velma Henry's interiority and the imaginary landscape of Claybourne, Georgia in *The Salt Eaters* (1980), positing a restorative antiphonal relationship to the landscape that perhaps vindicates Schafer's anxieties about the severance of sound from its point of origin in *The New Soundscape* (1969).

Engaging with Schafer's work enables analysis of the implications for human subjectivity when the voice can 'issue from anywhere in the landscape' (44), unrestricted by spatial, temporal, or physical boundaries. Schafer's transboundary conception of sound can be read in the first half of the chapter's positioning of the phonograph as time machine, resurrecting the voices of the dead or the absent. In the second half of the chapter, this metaphor is contemporarised with the revolutions of the dub plate, the reinventing wheel of Compton's sonic schema. The chapter enacts a "detour" (in Rinaldo Walcott's sense)³ into Black Canadian territories of spoken word and dub poetry, the texts signalling the navigation of multiple diasporas — African, African American, Caribbean, and Canadian. Like Lauri Ramey's debordering of the American canon with her petition to include the African American spirituals (1), this critical manoeuvre refocuses the diasporic lens to include Canada wholly in the canon, calling into question the peripheralisation of Black Canadian literatures. This chapter also performs a transboundary gesture of inclusion by reading Canadian-Caribbean spoken word poetry alongside African American and Black Canadian literature, documenting around performances to enable readings that consider the body and its multiple senses as readers and audiences navigate synaesthetically-conceived texts.

Compton's manipulation of sound in his practice of hip hop turntablism offers 'a way of producing a new kind of subjectivity' (Hayles 94), interrupting culturally constructed boundaries through a praxis akin to the Burroughs/Gysin cut up method. The boundary between body and postbody is worried by the grammaphonic voice and auto-destructive art practice of Compton's hands working, spinning, and degrading the dub plate. Positioning Compton's dub revolutions alongside the embodied auralities and antiphonal logic of Evanson's "The African All of It" and Clifton Joseph's wordless, vocal jazz elegy, "Poem for John Coltrane" (2007), further uncovers the porousness of this body boundary, forging an interstitial threshold, a vortex for radical experiments of identity shaped by jazz.

The work of chapters one and two identify the trope of spatial and temporal portals in black transnational literature, both for the production of space for alternative interpellation and for the movement of the postbody through space, time, and sound. Edwards' concept of *décalage* — 'a haunting gap or discrepancy' — assists our understanding of the cultural significance of this sonorous doorway for those belonging to the African diaspora (*Practice* 15). Chapter three applies Edwards' concept of *décalage* to demonstrate how the diaspora "step(s)" and "move(s)" through a kinetic interpellation that accords with the anatomical etymology of *articulation*, suggesting the 'strange "two-ness" of the joint' (15). In *Jazz* (1992), for example, Toni Morrison emphasises the agency of the body to kinetically architect city space, conceiving an antiphonal relation to the landscape, in which the city speaks to its inhabitants, directing their movements, 'smoothing its sidewalks, [and] correcting its curbstones' (64). *Décalage* is also traceable in the

“little pieces” of Derek Walcott’s poetics and his rendering of polyglot, multiply-inscribed Port of Spain, reflecting the incoherencies of the Caribbean’s fragmented island topography, incoherencies carnivalised by Earl Lovelace in *The Dragon Can’t Dance* (1979).

Like limbo, which summons the spirit and trickster strategies of Anancy, the titular dragon dance of Lovelace’s novel signifies a celebration and commemoration of ancestral memory. The projection of carnival into the streets of Port of Spain forges a portal not just through city space, but opens a temporal threshold through which the ancestor is invoked, like the ‘limbo gateway between Africa and the Caribbean’ posited by Wilson Harris (11). Lovelace’s depiction of the dragon dance, its mouth ‘breathing fire’ and its tail ‘threshing the ground’, suggests a disruption of the urban terrain (28). Additionally, Lovelace invests his text with the cadences and preoccupations of calypso and posits the calypsonian as chronicler: if Aldrick’s dragon costume operates as ‘visual repository’ for the history of the Hill, then Philo’s calypsos — even those that document its social decline — *sound* that history in accordance with the oral tradition (Aching 60). Furthermore, Brathwaite insists that oralities operate as ‘part of a total kinesis’, synaesthetically imbricating creative modalities (*ConVERSations* 224); like jazz, calypso invests the urban topography with the antiphonal impulse of the oral tradition. Such articulations of kinetic interpellation are important because they signify engagement with the production of space and enliven possibilities for a renewed relationship to the landscape.

Ramey’s excavation of the structural intricacies and cultural intensities of the slave songs allow for an innovative reading of Morrison’s text, which in critical

scholarship is usually read with an ear pressed to the musical structures announced by its title. Broadening my analysis by applying Ramey's work and placing Morrison's text alongside the calypsonian cadences of Lovelace's novel allows for a reading that positions *Jazz* within the soundscape of the African diaspora, in correspondence with Morrison's own interest in the development of black music across landscapes and histories. In the discursive space of *Jazz*, music is the pivot or portal by which temporal and spatial boundaries are made to dissolve, enabling the movement of the 'quasi-material' ancestral figure through space and time (Wiredu, *Cultural* 125). Ramey's work suggests that a concern with the bodily negotiation of time and space in diasporic literature is rooted in the development of cultural forms during slavery; in slave songs, for example, the doorway functions as a 'profoundly resonant objective correlative' which blends image and substance, representing a liminal state (116). Moreover, Ramey demonstrates how slave songs break 'physical, social, and imaginative barriers, navigating between images of stasis and movement, wholeness and fragmentation of identity, and being alive versus being in spirit' (140). The inheritances of the spirituals shape Morrison's articulation of the kinetic, dancing city; seen, for example, in the quasi-materialism of her narrator, and the detailed imagery of crossing the water as Joe and Violet Trace dance across the threshold on their train journey into the City. The influence of the spirituals is also evident in the "ghost physics" of Wild's embrace with the narrator and a palimpsestic narrative structure further suggestive of the processes of migration and synthesis. As well as these inheritances, Morrison structures her work through the modalities of jazz, through repetition and rupture, polyphony, and the riff. Morrison's blending of musical inheritances such as the spirituals, jazz,

and the blues, alludes to the continual revival of, and reinvestment in, the musical forms marking the sonic 'continuum' of the African diaspora, an act of remembrance and celebration (Brathwaite, *ConVERSations* 313). Mackey's continuum is also suggestive of a spatial, temporal, and sonic portal, and it is through this schema that Morrison invokes the female ancestor, whose versatility transcends not only these borders but crosses from the narrative space of *Beloved* to *Jazz*.

The crossings and palimpsests that emerge throughout the study signal the necessary transgression of binary constructs and borders between culture, nation, and geographies. Chapter three's comparative analysis of works from African American and Caribbean literature identified a porousness that allows the diaspora to step and move in various articulations, and advanced that this signals a revolutionary debordering of city space. The transgression of borderlines forms the focus of chapter four's explication of Compton's Black British Columbian and George Elliott Clarke's Africadian poetics. An analysis of Compton and Clarke's work through the lens of McLuhan's decentred galaxies illuminates this process of debordering. McLuhan's configuration controverts binary categorisations of centre and margin by conceiving of place as a network 'without a stable centre in dynamic interface' (Cavell, *McLuhan* 206). This dynamic interface can be seen in Clarke's mapping of Fredericton within a larger network of sites, borderlines, and boundaries traversed by the Hamilton brothers, a mapping that spans Maritime Canada and crosses the Atlantic, not only filling the 'gap in the map' of Gilroy's Black Atlantic framework but tracing its theoretical contours (Clarke, *Odysseys* 81).

In *George and Rue* (2005), Clarke inscribes the experiences of trauma and flux in the Hamilton brothers' movements through Fredericton, most viscerally demonstrated by the act of murder and the "Kafka-esque" journey that encloses it (174). The murder site becomes known as "Hammertown", and in this way the brothers' crime 'remains discursively imprinted on the local community' (Andrews 24), altering how the space is articulated, and positioning it as a resonant interval for the audition of a history of denied racial violences. The audition of racial violences is important for Canadian literature because Black Canadians battle erasure and elision from both national and transnational discourse. This points to the tension in a conception of boundaries as porous and the cultural need for a foundational narrative of presence and grounding *in* Canada, zoning black origins within urban space. Compton addresses this tension in *After Canaan* (2010), in which Hogan's Alley becomes a site of redefinition and exchange between African American cultural influences and the need for a distinctively Canadian identity, emphasising the overlapping diasporas of transnational blackness and a palimpsestic mapping of space.

A return to Compton's work in this chapter, along with an engagement with Clarke and Compton's critical writings, enables the development of some of the intensities of Canadian literature alluded to in chapter two. For example, the interstitial threshold created between the body and the postbody is rendered visible in Compton's story "The Lost Island", in which holographic composites, ghosts, and displaced migrants communicate and interact, rescuing one another from the desperate fate that seemingly befalls the burning city of Vancouver. Compton imagines an apocalyptic future in which bodies compete with postbody

composites, and traditional notions of subjectivity and consciousness are challenged.

This spectral visual schema is extended throughout Compton's *The Outer Harbour* (2014). Compton's poetics blend sonic and visual schemas for articulating the postbody via the medium of audio-visual technologies, as in his image of televisions crossing the ocean, imbricating notions of travel and transmission. Similarly, Compton's "The Reinventing Wheel" overtly connects the supernatural with the open 'body of a phonograph' which produces 'visceral' sound (*After* 199): his work is populated by quasi-material ghosts, postbody composites, and references to the afterlife and Middle Passage, for example in his imagery of zombies dancing in cargo holds (*Performance* 106). Compton's postbody poetics are dexterously applied, both memorialising the violent severance from ancestral history and prophesying the disturbing consequences of evolving technologies and expanding socio-spatial control of urban populations in his dystopian "The Outer Harbour", employing 'speculative writing to point at current conditions' (Thiessen 26). Thus Compton's postbody poetics manifest as a kind of temporal caesura in *The Outer Harbour*, intimating a spatial and textual mapping of time, seen, for example, in the shape-shifting transmutations of Pauline Johnson Island.

In his *Postmodern Cartographies* (1998), Brian Jarvis argues that a consideration of 'spatial representations must seek to address the caesura from which all cartographies are composed. Marginalised spaces are always implied and central to any map's significance' (8). This blended configuration of margin and centre is evidenced across the chapters of this study, infiltrating works representing American, Canadian, and Caribbean landscapes. James Baldwin may dispatch his

walker of the city at the close of his novel's first chapter, but his centrality to the psychogeographic terrain of *Another Country* is affirmed by the aural memorials that rupture the remaining parts and chapters, and the locus of his suicide: throwing himself from the middle of the George Washington Bridge and walking through Midtown to reach it. The relational value between margin and centre is inscribed into the textual topography of Clarke's *George and Rue* as the Africadian brothers exchange life at the edgelands of Fredericton for death at the downtown courthouse, yet the murder scene displaces the courthouse as caesura in Clarke's narrative.

Cartographic exchange also occurs in Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*, in which Aldrick's dragon costume is embodied with the fabric of Calvary Hill, worked 'into the scales and the threads', enabling the shantytown to be carried into Port of Spain, carnivalising the centre in a recursive process of ritual inversion (31). In a 1998 interview, Morrison famously states, 'I stood on the border, stood on the edge, and claimed it as central and let the rest of the world come over to where I was' (qtd. in Fultz 101). Envisioning the cartographic caesura as a site of exchanges of meaning allows for Compton's Afroperipheralism, which emphasises varied black experience beyond the diasporic master narratives against what he regards as the 'redemptive drive' of Afrocentrism (*After* 15), McLuhan's decentred galaxies, and Morrison's centre to co-exist. As Doreen Massey insists, it is possible to 'sense the simultaneous presence of everywhere in the place where you are standing' (*Space* 162). Rather than binarising centre and margin within a fixed framework, places 'can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings' ("Power-Geometry" 66). In line with the project's foundation in

comparative analysis, the following discursive space draws out and synthesises some of the connections across the chapters and literary locales that make up the whole work, aiming to position the texts within an approximation of a transboundary interface.

George and Rue's psychogeographic surveys of the spaces of Atlantic Canada — and, indeed, George's Atlantic crossings as merchant marine — imply a state of flux and exile that can be traced in Rufus' frenetic movements between uptown and downtown New York, policed by a reifying white gaze and regulated by a synaesthetic beat that propels his body and vibrates the cityscape. The "Kafkaesque" journey of Clarke's Hamilton brothers is likened to a coiled noose that inscribes the terrain with racial terror like the iron rail that enacts the injunction 'go, leave, *this is not your country*' (De Certeau 112, emphasis added). Baldwin's beat and the vibrations of the A-train, along with 'the seemingly / endless / purgatorial / experience / of black / people' signified by the brothers' perpetual motion, syncopate time and space for the protagonists of each narrative, all of whom will die in the course of its unfolding (Brathwaite, "Dream" 132). To enlarge the scope of the conclusions reached by Amy Reddinger in her analysis of Baldwin's text, it can be argued that the violence of these journeys compel Rufus, George, and Rue to suicide and murder (123).

The visual regimes that operate in Baldwin's New York spaces find correspondences in the surveillance that pervades the pages of Morrison's *Jazz*. The occupants of Morrison's Harlem and Baldwin's New York are monitored by a panoptic presence concretised in the architecture of the cityscape. The walkers of Baldwin's city risk losing themselves in the viciously racialised maze of Greenwich

Village, committing to deaths orchestrated by the urban terrain: 'going under a subway train... going home and blowing their brains out or turning on the gas or leaping out of the window' (*PT xi*). Baldwin acknowledges the 'animate agency' of the urban scene in this depiction, and pathways an alternative interpellation in the sonorous, vibrant space of Delaney's Village enclave (Turner, *Literary* 22). Similarly, the occupants of Morrison's Harlem kinetically author the urban landscape in what I have termed an antiphonal relationship between them. But *Jazz* offers a more playful, subversive response to the visual regimes at work in New York: Morrison's Harlemites return and defy the prismatic and voyeuristic gaze (of the narrator, of the city, of whiteness) that attempts to define them; they watch, whisper to each other about, and pity Morrison's "I" (220), and forge portals for self-definition in the narrative that are akin to jazz solos crossing the constellation of a larger communal work.

Surveying New York from an elevated perspective on the balcony of a high-rise building in *Another Country*, Rufus feels he is 'standing on a cliff in the wilderness, seeing a kingdom and a river which he had not seen before' (22). Reddinger recovers a rhetoric in which the city is rendered as a 'wilderness or "urban jungle" in which chaos and racial violence prevails' (127). Wilderness is figured in a number of the texts in this study; it metaphorizes not only the racial and sexual anxieties of city living in sixties America, but haunts the cultural landscape of Canada. In Clarke's *Execution Poems* (2001), snow is emblematic both of wilderness and a hostile white landscape, and he blends wild and urban space in his portrayal of the act of murder at the outskirts of Fredericton, as Rue asks: 'Can we cover up a murder with snow? / With white, frosty roses?' (35). In her work

“Who’s Afraid of the Urban?” Eva Darias-Beutell suggests that, in contemporary Canada, the wilderness ‘is the city’ (342), while Justin Edwards and Douglas Ivison argue that Vancouver ‘includes the spectre of the wilderness’ (207). In these depictions, urban and wild spaces exchange and/or blend positions of centre and periphery, which disrupts the ‘ordered zoning of discrete spaces’ that map nordicity and ghettoise blackness (Edwards and Ivison 208). What each of these depictions of wilderness share is a lexicon of horror, ghostliness, and haunting in attempts to negotiate spaces of segregation and the racialised and gendered streets of the cityscape.

Many of the texts explicate the effects of the experience of hauntedness on urban subjectivity, particularly its implications for the question of black identity in the city. As Rufus experiences a process of socio-spatial abjection and defamiliarisation from his own body, this hauntedness represents ‘the danger to identity that comes from without’ (Jarvis 191): ghosts can possess the body, terrorise the mind, and infiltrate and inhabit domestic and public space. Yet ghosts represent ‘both the potentially threatening and the potentially liberating instabilities of identity’ (Jarvis 191). Lisa Mansell understands ‘[m]ergers of the ghost and the physical’ as dismantling ‘culturally constructed binaries’ and forging a ‘blended conceptual space in between these positions — a post-body, a hyphen, a both’ that celebrates our ‘interconnected position as subjects’, traceable in Baldwin’s description of his initiatory meeting with Beauford Delaney, which adopts a postbody poetic echoed by David Leeming’s own experience upon meeting the artist.⁴ Spiritual apparitions haunt pages across the project, rupturing narrative, sonic, and psychic space, like the ghostly voices that embody the phonograph in

chapter two and the 'phantom' subjectivity described by Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The act of haunting and quasi-materialism in Ellison's explication of visual regimes is suggestive of a postbody disruption of binaries and boundaries that echo in the flickering, projected hybrid identities of Compton's "The Lost Island". Furthermore, Compton's image of 'fractals of bodies made out of bodies and carrying forth bodies of the past' (*Outer* 40) indicate an endless replication and rebirth of the ancestor. This process of replication and rebirth articulates the capacity of the postbody and, conceived sonically, the capability of the African American spirituals to act as threshold for the blending and transgression of temporal, spatial, and physical limits. Compton's fractal patterns also conjure the latticework anatomy of Lovelace's dragon, constructed from scraps of cloth, and the fragments of Derek Walcott's mended vase metaphor for Antillean history and for poetic composition, portraying cultural practice as a temporal portal for engaging ancestral memory.

This study recognised and traced a sounding line that vibrated with jazz and travelled between the works of black transnational authors writing from and invested with sites in American, Canadian, and Caribbean landscapes. The sounding line has been conceived as a detour (or a *dérive*) that treats the border as resonant interval or sonorous portal, like the 'unusual door' or the interstitial threshold marked by Legba's *vévé* (Leeming 36). The walker of the city can produce and change space by innovating portals forged by an alternative interpellation achieved through visual, sonic, and kinetic schemas. These portals allow for the movement of the postbody through time and space, like ghosts in the phonograph, and communion with ancestors, forged by cultural forms like dragon dance and jazz, and provide spaces of redefinition, like the recovery and recuperation of black

history in the work of Compton and Clarke. As Jarvis notes, '[t]o know one's place and to change places it is necessary to listen to the meanings buried... across the storied earth' (191). The roots and routes of this journey share and exchange touchstones like aural memorial and antiphonal kinesis that enact crossings and negotiate the socio-spatial dialectic, palimpsestic histories, and tidalectic waves of diaspora.

Jazz-shaped bodies forge portals through shifting and ultimately porous borderlines of nation, region, and identity, resignifying spatial meanings and establishing alternative interpellations through cultural innovation. Jazz — as visible and audible sign (Siemerling 212) — becomes a metaphor in the texts for invention, innovation, and the urban, modelling processes of improvisation, metamorphosis, and of symbiosis between community and individual. The jazz text, like calypso, performs the landscape from which it emerges, in its various articulations and renditions. The recurring tropes of inscription and tracing, of margin and centre, underscore the significance of rendition to black transnational writing, which allows the synaesthetic rendering — mapping — of (overlapping, multiple, evolving) diasporic cultures. These are renditions of: the body, through antiphonal and kinetic relationships between body and landscape; of space, forging portals for black redefinition in the city; of time, through temporal thresholds travelled by postbodies and carving a space for the invocation of the ancestor; and through sound, offering alternative interpellation through sonic interference and intervention, akin to ghost-like voices rising from the grooves of phonographic revolution.

Notes

Introduction

¹ Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as the 'state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death' (28), and Gilroy harnesses this definition in his discussion of African American rates of incarceration.

² Whilst prisons are not the primary focus of this study, they are a part of the wider carceral geographies that shape my reading of the processes of segregation, ghettoisation, and incarceration in the city (Gregory 583).

³ Alexander evidences this point throughout her text, but especially in chapter three, "The Color of Justice", 97-139. Earlier, she notes that '[n]othing has contributed more to the systematic mass incarceration of people of color in the United States than the War on Drugs' (60). In chapter three, she explicates how black men in particular are demonised as, in 'the drug war, the enemy is racially defined' (98).

⁴ Prison industrial complex refers to 'the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social, and political problems' ("Prison"). Angela Davis notes that the term was developed by activists and scholars who argued that 'prison construction and the attendant drive to fill these new structures with human bodies have been driven by ideologies of racism and the pursuit of profit' (84).

⁵ Barack Obama's 19 July 2013 remarks after George Zimmerman, a neighbourhood watch volunteer, was acquitted for shooting and killing seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida in 2012:

You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot, I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago... I think it's important to recognize that the African-American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that — that doesn't go away (qtd. in Gilroy, "Race" 1).

⁶ I intentionally echo the language of Edward Soja on capitalism (see endnotes below) here, as Alexander, Gilroy, and Gilmore each comment on the corporate and political profitability of the US prison industrial complex, for example, through the exploitation of prison labour (Davis 84).

⁷ I borrow this phrase from Edward Soja's chapter on the socio-spatial dialectic in *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), 76-93, and his earlier essay, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic" (1980).

⁸ Of capitalism, for example, Soja writes that its survival depends upon the:

distinctive production and occupation of a fragmented, homogenized, and hierarchically structured space — achieved largely through bureaucratically

(that is to say, state) controlled collective consumption, the differentiation of centres and peripheries at multiple scales, and the penetration of state power into everyday life (*Postmodern* 92).

⁹ Lefebvre defines the city as a 'space which is fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period' (73).

¹⁰ In the context of architecture and urbanism, for example, Lefebvre writes: 'People *look*, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself. We build on the basis of papers and plans. We buy on the basis of images' (75-76).

¹¹ Guy Debord defines *détournement* as 'the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble', governed by two 'fundamental laws... the loss of importance of each detoured autonomous element... and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble' (Knabb 55).

Chapter One: "Here Be Dragons"

¹ In human geography, the term "spatial structure" is used to denote 'the interdependence of human agency and spatial structures, whereby agency responds to but also reproduces and transforms its spatial templates' (Gregory 715).

² Jarvis argues that the 'three most significant power structures in contemporary American society are capitalism, patriarchy and white racial hegemony' (7).

³ Alexander's work offers a legal insight into the spatial and social control of African American citizens in urban centres, which culminates in an interrogation of current drug law enforcement practices in the United States.

⁴ Pile argues that third spaces 'call into question the constitution of dualisms'; they are 'not simply gaps between axes of power (such as race, class, gender, sexuality), they are also created out of the interactions between power relations' (183).

⁵ See: Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (1994), 270-272. In a conversation between Leeming and myself, he drew comparisons between his personal experiences with Delaney and Baldwin's own, and described a journey that took them out of their bodies.

⁶ I borrow the phrase from Alan Rice, *Creating Memorials, Building Identities* (2010).

⁷ In the story "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon", the narrator similarly comments that the statue of liberty 'had always been an ugly joke to me' (163).

⁸ Pile, in turn, echoes Henri Lefebvre's work on the urban spectacle in *The Production of Space* (1974), which notes that: 'It combines the city's reality with its ideality, embracing the practical, the symbolic, and the imaginary' (74).

⁹ In his 1964 essay on the distinction between the eye and the gaze, Jacques Lacan suggests that human subjectivity is constructed when the subject experiences him or herself as an object under the scrutiny of a gaze: 'The spectacle of the world, in this sense, appears to us as all-seeing' (75).

¹⁰ Baldwin's crumbling wall is reminiscent of the narrator's desire in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong's "What Did I Do to Be So

Black and Blue” simultaneously. He wants to ‘feel [the] vibration’ of Armstrong’s performance in his underground bunker (8). In Baldwin’s work it is the originary performance, rather than a recording, which has the power to crumble walls; what this achieves is more ambiguous, as along with applause, envy and racism may wash over Arthur too.

¹¹ Of migrants moving north, Baldwin states: ‘They do not move to Chicago, they move to the South Side; they do not move to New York, they move to Harlem’.

¹² As noted above, Debord explains this mechanism in “Theory of the *Dérive*”: ‘cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones’ (Knabb 50).

¹³ Baldwin’s portrayals were not unilaterally popular, especially his open disdain for Harlem’s housing projects: Boyd writes that he was ‘lambasted for chastising the projects in Harlem’ (139). In particular, his ‘suggestion that the inhabitants of the projects urinated on the walls and generally defaced the units brought an angry response’ from Harlem newspapers (Boyd 133).

¹⁴ Although he made regular visits to Harlem, Baldwin expresses some difficulty about the separation in a letter to his friend Dan Fink in 1943, writing: ‘I left in Harlem a family and a faith, and this is never done without terrible misgivings’ (qtd. in Boyd 58).

¹⁵ In *Go Tell It*, John Grimes’ excursion into the city is marked by a sense of transgression, as he uses the money given to him by his mother for his birthday to buy a cinema ticket: ‘he stared at the price above the ticket-seller’s window and, showing her his coins, received the piece of paper charged with the power to open doors’ (28). Griffin argues that the Harlem branch library provides John with ‘the foundation and the map for navigating’ the white world beyond Harlem (88).

¹⁶ *The Fire Next Time* was published in 1963, just one year after *Another Country*, and is regarded as a key text of the Civil Rights Movement (Field 47).

Chapter Two: Ghosts in the Phonograph

¹ Compton quotes from Frederick Douglass’ *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) (‘We meant to reach the north – and the North was our Canaan’) to evidence this connection between the North, freedom, and “psalmic” Canaan (*After* 15).

² Vibration and sound are inherently imbricated, as Schafer reminds us: ‘Anything in our world that moves vibrates air’, and this movement is heard as sound if it oscillates at more than about 165 times a second (5).

³ Schafer defines noise as ‘any undesired sound signal’ (18).

⁴ In a public conversation with Junot Diaz, Toni Morrison identifies a tension in Ellison’s use of the trope of invisibility, commenting that the narrative of African Americans is often controlled by the white gaze implied by mainstream publishers:

I can feel that gaze; that they’re really not talking to me. You know, you write a book and call it *Invisible Man* — invisible to whom? Not me. So

that's already [holds up hands as a barrier], a wonderful book that still has that other gaze.

⁵ In "The Grain of the Voice" (1972), Roland Barthes figures vocal grain in the 'dual production... of language and of music' as the signifier occupying 'the very precise space (genre) of *the encounter between a language and a voice*' (181).

⁶ Tate argues, moreover, that the female characters in Ellison's *Invisible Man* function 'like the underground station masters of the American slave era' (254).

⁷ Of the chronology of the novel, Bambara states that she practiced an 'avoidance of a linear thing in favour of a jazz suite' (qtd. in Rice 105), endowing the temporal with sonic structures.

⁸ Bull and Back explain that, in the modern world: 'understanding is identified with *seeing*. In the hierarchy of the senses, the epistemological status of hearing has become a poor second to that of vision' (1).

⁹ For example, Schafer writes that schizophonia is 'supposed to be a nervous word' (47).

¹⁰ Cavell quotes from McLuhan's *Through the Vanishing Point* (1968).

Chapter Three: Crossing the Water

¹ Wiredu writes: 'I do not know of any African thought system in which mind is conceived as an entity rather than as a capacity, namely, the capacity to think' ("African" 16).

² Turner discusses Talmy's "fictive motion" and Boyer's "ghost physics" here.

³ The "wandering" chorus is an interesting element of slave songs in which a refrain would appear in multiple songs, leaving little chance of discovering the originary author, whilst William Burton's description of the "mosaic" quality of slave songs emphasises how some songs were pieced together from others (Ramey 103).

⁴ Morrison views *Jazz* as part of a trilogy that rewrites the major epochs of African American history, buttressed by the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era setting of *Beloved*, and the novel *Paradise* (1997), set largely in the 1960's in an all-black town in Oklahoma, during the second Reconstruction (1960-1975) (Scruggs, *Sweet* 15).

⁵ The impression of a thunderlike voice is strongly conveyed in the novel's final chapter, when the narrator imparts that they have a 'sweettooth' for pain, for '[b]olts of lightning, little rivulets of thunder. And I the eye of the storm' (119).

⁶ This synaesthetic rendering of the architectural environment resembles Friedrich Schelling's notion of architecture as music in space, as 'frozen music' (177).

⁷ Kamau Brathwaite in conversation with Nathaniel Mackey at Poet's House, New York on 18 November 1993, published as a multiphasic draft with elaborations in 1999.

⁸ Lovelace's address combines pieces entitled "Engaging Our Landscape" and "Rebellion Against, Rebellion For", which he delivered at other events during the year, including the PEN World Vision Festival 2013 in New York, and the Caribbean Urban Forum 2013 in Trinidad.

⁹ Chamberlin's work is an important reminder of the Caribbean's Amerindian legacies.

Chapter Four: Gap in the Map

¹ This dominant metanarrative is in part a historical remnant of Canada's role in the operations of the Underground Railroad, which peaked between 1830 and 1860, when runaway slaves sought refuge north of the American border (Cooper 69).

² The date of Confederation, which began the process of conversion of colonies to Canadian provinces, is 1867, whilst slavery was abolished in Canada in 1833.

³ With the passing of Simcoe's Act Against Slavery in 1793 in what was then known as Upper Canada, the British territory that would become Ontario, enslaved Americans began to move northward towards freedom. Cooper attributes the spread of this knowledge among black populations in the US to the War of 1812. However, Simcoe's bill granted freedom to slaves who arrived from other parts of the world, but it did nothing to free existing slaves in Upper Canada or to prevent slave owners from selling slaves to an international market. As a consequence, with the gradual abolition of slavery across the Northwest Territory of the US from 1787, Upper Canadian slaves were escaping southward into the free American territories (Cooper 103).

⁴ In a 2002 interview with Kevin McNeilly, Clarke expressed a fascination with the effects of 'African American cultural imperialism on Canada', arguing 'you have to reconfigure that in your own ways in order to have it be useful for your life here... we take that influence and we adapt it' (63).

⁵ Whilst the seemingly divergent theories of nationalism and regionalism, diaspora and transnationalism have come to define the theoretical positions of Clarke and Walcott respectively, some critics levelly reveal that 'these are not clear-cut perspectives for either critic' (Fraile 78). Despite Clarke's grounding in Africadian identity, he states: 'I testify: African-Canadian literature has always been international' (*Eyeing xv*).

⁶ First published 1997; the text refers to Walcott's introduction to the second revised edition of *Black Like Who?*

⁷ In 2014, the City of Vancouver formally recognised its founding upon the unceded aboriginal land of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nation people (Meiszner).

⁸ Johnson developed her stories from those told to her by Chief Joe Capilano of the Squamish people of North Vancouver, the 'old tillicum' of Johnson's tales.

⁹ Compton states that he uses 'a few tools common to fantasy and speculative writing to point at current conditions' (Thiessen 26).

¹⁰ Compton invokes the figure of Legba in a number of other poems, such as "JD", about James Douglas, the first governor of Vancouver Island, who 'never confirmed nor denied the rumour that he was part' black (*Bluesprint 272*), and in his long poem "Rune", collected in *Performance Bond* and discussed in chapter two.

¹¹ Compton notes that ‘Brathwaite borrows this description from an unnamed critic who was writing about his work’ (“Even” 22).

¹² Clarke addressed these issues at his 2013 lecture in Toronto. According to Clarke, black skin is aberrational with ‘the frosty temperatures and freezing precipitations’ of the Canadian climate. An assumption that black people are displaced in the North leads to, in Clarke’s opinion, an environmentally configured racialism.

¹³ ‘We meant to reach the north — and the North was our Canaan’ (Douglass qtd. in *After* 15).

¹⁴ Clarke was born after the event, in 1960.

¹⁵ Fraile presented her paper at “The Glocal City in Canadian Literature” conference in Salamanca, 2011.

¹⁶ James Baldwin’s use of similar imagery is discussed in chapter one of this study, particularly in terms of the ‘absolutely alabaster landscape’ (*Nobody* 18) of the Swiss mountain village where he wrote his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953).

¹⁷ Siemerling’s focus is Mairuth Sarsfield’s *No Crystal Stair* (1997), set in 1940s Montréal, though he also considers Clarke’s ‘jazz-inflected black anglophone Montréal’ (213).

¹⁸ Prime Minister of Canada 1968-1979 and 1980-1984.

¹⁹ Fraile positions Hill’s work as complicating ‘the seemingly polar positions within African Canadian criticism’ represented by Clarke and Walcott (78).

²⁰ Compton speaking after a performance of “The Reinventing Wheel” at the University of Waterloo in 2013.

Conclusions

¹ Although Gilroy, Brathwaite, and Edwards may share and exchange touchstones such as kinesis, liminality, and juncture, it is importance to stress that each theorist makes expressly distinctive contributions to our thinking on diasporic cultures.

² This movement is heard as sound if it oscillates at more than about 165 times a second (Schafer 5).

³ Walcott defines the detour as ‘an improvisatory and an in-between space which black diasporic cultures occupy’ (31).

⁴ As noted in chapter one, Leeming writes about his encounter with Delaney in Paris in his biography of Baldwin, and he related this experience in response to my research on Baldwin and Delaney’s Greenwich Village meeting. In addition to my conversation with David Leeming, my interviews with Earl Lovelace and George Elliott Clarke have allowed me to make contributions to existing scholarship in the body of the work: specifically, on the commodification of carnival and its role in the need for a renewed relationship to the landscape, and on the significance of the intersections of regional and provincial identities to the formation of a Black Canadian national consciousness. I am grateful to each of these authors for their time and generosity.

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