

***REPRESENTATIONS OF JAZZ MUSIC AND JAZZ PERFORMANCE
OCCASIONS IN SELECTED JAZZ LITERATURE***

by

MICHAEL FRANK TITLESTAD

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

ENGLISH

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF IA RABINOWITZ

APRIL 1999

Student number: 640-979-2

Statement by candidate

I declare that *Representations of Jazz Music and Jazz Performance Occasions in Selected Jazz Literature* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



.....
SIGNATURE

30 April 1999

.....
DATE

(MR M F TITLESTAD)

Department of English

University of South Africa

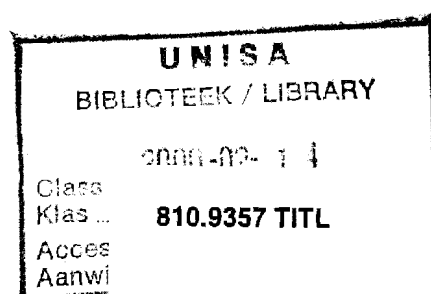
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Ivan Rabinowitz for his graceful interventions and guidance in the course of this project. In addition I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Susan Spearey for her encouragement and comments, particularly concerning the broader implications of improvisation. Further, I am obliged to those colleagues, particularly Mitzi Andersen, Gwen Kane and David Levey, who assisted with proof-reading and were enthusiastic and supportive. Finally, this dissertation is a tribute to all the jazz musicians and writers who have contributed to the 'one continuing song'.

Summary

The founding hypothesis of the study is that creative writers translate jazz music and performance into discourse by recourse to a number of figurative domains. These translations map existential, anthropological and political spaces and situate jazz within these. The first chapter concerns the representation of jazz in the construction of alterity, focussing on the evocation of the Dionysian spirit of jazz, the parallels between jazz and Bakhtin's carnival and the strategic deployment of 'blackness' in configurations. The second chapter applies the notion of 'existential integration' in tracing some of the fluid boundaries between the music, the body of the instrument and the body of the performer in representations. The final chapter looks at the contrary tendency: the representation of mystical transcendence in the course of listening to or performing jazz. Underlying each of the three chapters is a concern with the emergence and propagation of oppositional identities in jazz writing.

810.90357 TITL



0001740965

Contents

Introduction	i–vii
Chapter 1: <i>Civilization's Noise: Jazz, Dionysus and the Carnival</i>	1–49
Chapter 2: <i>Jazz Bodies: Somatic, Instrumental and in Process</i>	50–98
Chapter 3: <i>Mystical Jazz: Romantics, Shamans and Preachers</i>	99–155
Conclusion	156–162
Bibliography	163–174

Introduction

N., the correspondent in the epistolary work, *The Bedouin Hornbook* (1986) by Nathaniel Mackey, is invited to speak at a symposium entitled 'Locus and Locomotivity in Postcontemporary Music'. He chooses to offer a meditation on a piece of music performed at harvest time by the Toupouri of the Fianga region in Chad. The piece is 'played by a wind orchestra comprised of ten men, nine of whom form a counterclockwise-moving circle, at the centre of which the tenth player stands' (1986:112). Two sections of N.'s ruminations on the implications of the piece, both intricately analogical, announce the theoretical problematic of speaking or writing about music.

My impression is that the lead horn is played by the man who stands at the centre of the revolving circle. A commitment to pulling free of ceremonial stasis is there to be heard in the ostensibly centered yet in reality ripped, eccentric voice bled by the orbiting chorus of horns' centrifugal flutter. A would-be hub overcome by wobble one might call it. What gets me is the way this loss of alignment throws and then retrieves the voice, as though it installed or instituted a rift only in order to erase it. (1986:114)

The susceptibility of the Toupouri piece to any number of allegorizations (symbolic sociality, symbolic circumlocution, symbolic hollowness-musically-sculptured-by-breath and so forth) leaves me dangling as to which thread to pursue. I'm thinking of calling my talk "The Creaking of the Word," which is the name the Dogon give to their weaving block. The sense I get from this is that a) we can't but help be involved in fabrication, b) a case can be made for leaving loose ends loose, and c) we find ourselves caught in a rickety confession no matter what. (1986:115-6)

The voice of the Toupouri lead horn is endlessly decentred, persistently overcome by the momentum of collaborative effort to which it speaks. In its temporary assertion of dominance it pretends a capacity to anchor, but is repeatedly reduced to eccentricity. When the lead horn is eccentric, when it is out of 'alignment' with the group, it announces a rift by speaking for

the group from which it has become distinct. It can be considered, at these moments, to be metonymic. According to Bhabha, metonymy, 'a figure of contiguity that substitutes a part for a whole [...] must not be read as a form of simple substitution or equivalence [but as a] circulation of part and whole, identity and difference...' (1994:54). In its flights of difference, the singular voice of the dominant horn announces its lack, its dislocation from the whole for which it comes to stand. In doing so, however, it simultaneously becomes a departure point for a new identity of the assembly. Borrowing from Bhabha's formulation, the lead horn heralds both the 'thrill' and the 'threat' (1994:55) of the metonymic relationship. The 'threat' is persistent eccentricity, being endlessly at odds with the whole. The 'thrill' is the advent of the new, the possibility that the singled out can be reciprocated in a movement which affirms the integrity of the whole.

By analogy, any allegorization of a musical work is metonymic. An allegory, while masquerading as a 'would-be hub' of the work's meaning, is endlessly 'overcome by wobble'. Stated simply, a musical work is always in excess of any discursive translation because of the 'centrifugal flutter' of possible readings and meanings which surround it. The speaking subject who translates music into discourse inevitably introduces a rift between a singular reading and potentialities which surround the musical work. The process of representation is unstable in that its inevitable singularity suggests lack: representation announces its own difference from its object and, in doing so, the words 'creak' under the strain of their function. This dissertation is about the 'creaking of the word' under the weight of representational responsibility.

My hypothesis is that music is not simply unspeakable as is regularly held (Barzun 1996:193–202). To return to the figure of the Toupouri horn player: there is an economy of exchange between singularity and wholeness in representational practice. Attempts to translate music into discourse, while they separate themselves from their object, are also contiguous with that object. Music is not independent of attempts to represent it in discourse. This is not to make a sweeping claim about musical meaning; rather it is to suggest that the rhetoric of representation exists in a circular relation to musical composition, performance and reception. Whether, for example, on the level of subcultural argot or the interdependence

of conceptualization and composition, music and the language in which it is represented cannot be held to be distinct. What will emerge in the course of this dissertation is that representations of jazz music and performance contribute to the fabric of the music itself. Representational and musical practices are coextensive in many pertinent ways. Whatever rift is instituted in the act of speaking for and about music, the characterizing voice offers itself up to the productive possibilities of incorporation, contradiction or development. It also, in its difference (from other voices, from its object, and from itself), sounds spaces in ways which elucidate and create, even while seeming inadequate to the music itself. This dissertation, then, concerns the discursive *work* of representing jazz rather than forms of resignation to the impossibility of encapsulating it in words.

The problem raised by Mackey as to ‘which thread to pursue’ haunts the present study. Any contemplation of representational practices finds itself ‘involved in fabrication’ in both senses implied by Mackey. Firstly, the selection of a particular thread in analysis determines a course through a rich rhetorical fabric. In this dissertation a limited number of threads has been chosen and, while I resist statements disguised as definite conclusions, this selection risks the accusation of a prior scheme of expectations. All I can hope is that the singularities of the tropes and allegories I examine are at least productive. The second sense of fabrication is more difficult to sweep under a rhetorical carpet. To *re-present* representational practices is to be complicit in the tropes which they comprise. At times, I am aware, my analyses are embedded in the discursive configurations which are supposedly the object of their commentary. While I have attempted to avoid a blurring of the tropes under analysis and the analytical discourse in which they are explicated, this occurs repeatedly. These introductory comments themselves stage this problematic. For much of the remainder of this dissertation, as here, the analyses are spoken in an implicated voice; they are rhetorical performances which repeat, with difference, the rhetoric of the literary texts being considered. To use a jazz analogy, the dissertation plays around a series of tropic standards used in representing the music and its performance. The exact point at which it is possible to extricate this performance from the performances of others is difficult to discern. Accepting that jazz can be model for theoretical discourse, this study shamelessly substitutes jazz standards for the conventional standards of analytical discourse.

Mackey's second assertion, that 'a case can be made for leaving loose ends loose,' mirrors the inconclusive nature of this analysis. The loose ends arise from the immodest scope of this project, but also reflect some of its complexities. At times I have found it sufficient to raise questions that might be pursued productively at a later juncture. While I set out clutching the myth of comprehensiveness, I soon realised that the texts were in excess of anything that could be *contained* here (just as the music they represent is in excess of their representations). As Mackey implies, though, loose threads reveal the construction of the fabric while avoiding the certainties that might stultify productive interventions.

There is, following Mackey's third insight into offering an analysis of music, a sense in which this analysis is 'caught in a rickety confession'. I have come to consider the models of improvised performance offered by jazz studies to be both ontologically and politically enticing. In its resistance of teleology, its constant wandering at the border of noise and musicality and its embrace of provisionality through undermining the fetish of the work, jazz opens up important possibilities for theory, politics and psychology. Furthermore, in its carefully sustained balance between individual actualization and mutuality, jazz performs an ideology which has potential applications that go well beyond the domain of music. Over the years, jazz has become the space of my wish for new modes of action and thinking, for alternative practices of identity and intersubjectivity. This 'rickety' set of confessional claims which, after this point, I do not address explicitly is responsible for the evangelical edge which I have been unable to suppress in the course of writing.

Detailing the content of this dissertation entails another level of confession. I set out with the intention of mapping, comprehensively, the discursive strategies through which jazz and performance occasions are represented in a wide range of literary texts. I hoped to classify the tropes used in the discursive configuration of jazz into a limited number of domains and then to dedicate a chapter to each. My attempt to do this is, perhaps, best considered a meaningful failure. Discursive strategies are always in excess of such characterization and categorization. In addition to this, though, a wilful analytical tidiness came to seem entirely at odds with both the texts themselves and the lived realities of the music they represented. I resolved, therefore, on a scheme that is at once more modest and more ambitious.

I limited the dissertation to four linked planes of discursive practice (three of which have chapters dedicated to them, the fourth of which, analogous to a chord progression, underlies each) and reduced the number of texts which I discuss in detail. The first plane concerns the use of jazz in the construction of alterity, addressing the creation of an epistemological and ontological space of Africanism¹ and examining the ways in which 'jazz' as signifier comes to stand for 'otherness' through the strategic deployment of racial difference. Following Morrison's suggestions for a critical agenda, this section analyses '[w]hat Africanism became for, and how it functioned in, the literary imagination [...] because it may be possible to discover, through a close look at literary "blackness", the nature – even the cause – of literary "whiteness" ' (1992:9). I argue that the primitive and Dionysian tropes in which jazz is regularly configured in Harlem Renaissance and early-Modernist writing (and which persist, with a remarkable tenacity, in the present) make jazz, for different reasons, a space of the wish for African American and (both American and European) white writers. This notion is then developed in an analysis of the carnival tropes through which jazz comes to be arrayed against 'the fixed and frozen statue of the static body representing officialdom' (Wall 1990:53) and comes to be seen as the sound of 'the dynamic collective body which "incorporates" the monument of popular culture and lived memory' (1990:53). Much of this later discussion is indebted to Jacques Attali's theorization of the 'political economy of music' (Attali 1985).

The second plane of tropic fabrication, while reflecting back on the implications of primitive embodiment discussed in the first section, is that on which jazz is represented as the warp and weft of desire and discipline. The fluid boundaries between music, the body of the instrument and the body of the performer are regularly the location of representation. It is the contemplation of these boundaries and, to use Kristeva's notion from *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), the irruptive transgressions across them, which leads me to conjecture that

¹ The use of this term derives from the writing of Toni Morrison. 'I use [Africanism] as term for the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people. As a trope, little restraint has been attached to its uses.' (Morrison, Toni. 1992 *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press: 6–7.)

literary jazz is a constructive mirror for many of the preoccupations of contemporary embodiment theory.

Moving beyond bodies, the third plane of troping is that organized around journeys of transcendence. 'Musician, priest and officiant were in fact a single function among ancient peoples' (Attali 1985:11). A tropic persistence of this equivalence is apparent in the representation of jazz musicians as shamanic guides, prophets, as integrators and as ritualistic inheritors and heralds of collective memory. Furthermore, in literary representations, jazz music is commonly overlaid with a patina of Romantic iconography which seems at odds with its characterization as the soundtrack of high Modernism. The present section explores this seeming contradiction. Furthermore, it discusses the simultaneity of the movements into and beyond the body which are effected through the conflation of literary African ritualism and mystical traditions.

My fourth preoccupation is individual, cultural and political identity. Each of the foregoing three discussions relates to the emergence and propagation of identities in the course of representing jazz. This is, therefore, an underlying concern of the study as a whole while framing or directing each particular analysis. Political, cultural and historical narratives are commonly grafted onto jazz music: there is a tropic economy in which figurations are exchanges between the music and its cultural and historical significance. African American and other diasporic identities are regularly mapped in these translations. Furthermore, alternative or oppositional identities in other contexts often fly the flag of jazz: mustering under the signs of alterity, they declare allegiance to a reading of Africanism which announces a particular ontological (and political) paradigm. Matters of identity, then, are integral to what jazz is *for* in literary works; the work it is required to do. On one level, each of the sections of this dissertation is a variation on this theme.

Despite having conceded that this study does not pretend to be comprehensive, some obvious exclusions need to be declared. The study makes allusions to the blues tradition only in passing. On one level, this is, given the origin of jazz in the blues and the persistence of the blues idiom, an arbitrary exclusion. A case can be made, though, for the independence of

jazz literature and music from the blues. The trajectory of urban jazz history (from New Orleans jazz, to swing, to bebop, to free and *avant-garde* jazz), while indebted to the rural tradition of blues guitar and vocals, is distinct from it. Jazz has an established pantheon of heroes, whose biographies and innovations are taken to be paradigmatic, and it has spawned a specific iconography and literary tradition. Thus, while this analysis depends on certain continuities between the blues and jazz, its focus is on representations of the music of that tradition (mythically) inaugurated by Buddy Bolden, developed by Louis Armstrong, institutionalized by the likes of Benny Goodman and Cab Calloway, extended endlessly by Duke Ellington, revolutionised by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk, fragmented and etherealized by John Coltrane and 'postmodernised' by Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and Anthony Braxton.

This dissertation concerns the *representation* of jazz and performance occasions rather than the (real or imagined) *stylistic* approximation of jazz structure in prose or poetry. Jazz method has facilitated a variety of poetic innovations and, in many important instances, functions as a productive model for both creative and theoretical discourse.² These innovations and applications, though, fall beyond the scope of this dissertation. I dwell at greater length on this exclusion in my concluding comments.

To return to Mackey's proposed (though tentative) analysis of the Toupouri performance: each of these discussions performs an allegory of meaning by imposing (albeit fleetingly) a singular interpretive voice in the midst of a fluidity of potential readings. While these readings might seem to disregard the 'centrifugal flutter' of meaning to which I referred, they do so only in the hope that they play into the discursive momentum of which they are a part. On some level, each of the representations I analyse is an attempt, on the part of a writer, to approach the uncanniness of music, to make jazz temporarily 'inhabitable, like a

² Based on his contention that 'the figures which organize jazz are, in fact, the figures which organize writing,' Jarrett (1983:13) argues compellingly for a range of models for theoretical discourse derived from 'four multivalent images – rhapsody, *saturna*, obligato and *charivari*' which order jazz composition. He also demonstrates the use of these figures as organizers of discourse in an array of literary texts.

rented apartment' (De Certeau 1984:xx). I admitted that the study had become more ambitious in the course of composition. What will emerge in this dissertation is a conviction that these temporary habitations alter the structure of the building itself, that the provisional and emergent identities suggested by flights of figuration make possible a new music and a particular form of musical knowing. In some way, each of these voices affects the trio of knowledge, music and literature.

Chapter 1

Civilization's Noise: Jazz, Dionysus and the Carnival

The mud fell from their thighs, like placenta from a baby. Then, like the baby's cry, each Ancestor opened his mouth and called out, 'I AM!' 'I am – Snake ... Cockatoo ... Honey-ant ... Honeysuckle ...' And this first 'I am!', this primordial act of naming, was held then and forever after, as the most secret and most sacred couplet of the Ancestor's song.

Each of the Ancients (now basking in the sunlight) put his left foot forward and called out a second name. He put his right foot forward and called out a third name. He named the waterhole, the reedbeds, the gum trees – calling to right and left, calling all things into being and weaving their names into verses.

The Ancients sang their way all over the world. They sang the rivers and ranges, salt-pans and sand dunes. They hunted, ate, made love, danced, killed: wherever their tracks led they left a trail of music.

Bruce Chatwin *The Songlines* (1987:81–2)

In the framework of enunciation, the walker constitutes, in relation to his position, both a near and a far, a *here* and a *there*. To the fact that the adverbs *here* and *there* are the indicators of the locutionary seat in verbal communication – a coincidence that reinforces the parallelism between linguistic and pedestrian enunciation – we must add that this location (*here – there*) (necessarily implied by walking and indicative of a present appropriation of space by an "I") also has the function of introducing an other in relation to this "I" and of thus establishing a conjunctive and disjunctive articulation of places.

De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984:99)

De Certeau's walker constitutes space by 'enunciating' particular possibilities (1984:99). The path is at once an articulation of geography and an announcement of situation: it is the practice of intervention in place through an assertion of particular transitions (*here – there*). To temporalize a place, to make it a succession of moments in which the walker *is* somewhere, is to make of being (in-the-world) a 'narrative' progression of positions, an unfolding sequence of passage. Each walk, though, also 'affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it "speaks" ' (1984:99). It exists, for De Certeau, as a practice (as opposed to a 'strategy') only in its references to the spaces in which it intervenes, in spite of the routes it avoids, in terms of those it actualizes and in opposition to the places against which it arrays itself. To walk, then, is to make a landscape habitable through making choices. It is to invent places by situating them in relation to each other, relative to the multiple possibilities of their context and in relation to the walking subject.

For De Certeau, analogous to modern Athens where the vehicles of mass transportation are *metaphorai* (1984:115), stories (like walks) are a means of traversing and organizing space: narratives, and the tropes which comprise them, draw boundaries, demarcate routes, articulate space and temporalize daily existence. They establish sequences, divide (what become) contraries, induce causalities and solve seeming contradictions. Stories are, then, a mapping of existential and anthropological space. They do so, as walking relates to geographical space, in relation to forms of previous enunciations, while also according particular configurations a truth value, an epistemological value or an ethical value (De Certeau 1984:99). Stories, thus, are a practice of spatiality existing (after the first walk of the Ancestors) with reference to previous narratives and their spatiality. Stories, even though their actualization might only have the duration of a walk across a city, are a way of managing the noise of potential meaning, the infinite cacophony of possibility against which any sequence of tropes establishes itself.

Just as stories exist to ward off chaos, so too does music. Music codifies sound by establishing boundaries between itself and that which it designates as its 'other'; it organizes noise and then is defined against the matrix from which it has been distilled (Attali 1985:4). The creation myth of the Aborigines combines walking, story-telling and music: three

processes of containment, three generative acts of intervention, delineation and codification. This grand narrative of origin stands as emblematic.

This chapter comprises a (partial) map of the anthropological and existential spaces accorded to jazz music and its performance in literary texts. These spaces can be distinguished by their contraries: they exist by virtue of narrative and tropic difference from (supposed or configured) opposites. This would seem, then, to suggest the need for a binary analysis which regularly inscribes a set of juxtapositions (Apollo – Dionysus, Lent – Carnival, harmony – noise, discipline – desire, civilization – primitivism). Following De Certeau, though, I will attempt to show that each narrative or sequence of tropes ‘affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it “speaks” ’ (1984:99), that each narrative is a practice of accommodation (that makes jazz habitable) which exists in a particular relation to the boundaries which demarcate literary jazz. Furthermore, a simple binarism (while perhaps in accord with the mythopoesis to which jazz is endlessly prone) denies the coextension of the pairs. The profusion of analyses which collapses binaries into discursive co-dependency (Bhabha 1994, Attali 1985, Sloterdijk 1989, Derrida 1982, Torgovnick 1990, Morrison 1992 and Kofman 1993, to list some of those to which I shall refer) suggests a productive translation across seeming boundaries, both in representational practice and in analysis. In this chapter, I attempt, then, to interrogate the binary construction of the space of jazz in creative writing, while considering the epistemological function of the separation of coextensive terms.

In his 1939 autobiography, *Manhood: A Journey from Childhood to the Fierce Order of Virility* (1984), Michel Leiris, the French surrealist and anthropologist writes:

In the period of great license that followed the hostilities, jazz was a sign of allegiance, an orgiastic tribute to the colours of the moment. It functioned magically, and its means of influence can be compared to a kind of possession. It was the element that gave these celebrations their true meaning: a *religious* meaning, with communion by dance, latent or manifest eroticism, and drinks, the most effective means of bridging the gap that separates individuals from each other at any kind of

gathering. Swept along by violent bursts of topical energy, jazz still had enough of a 'dying civilization' about it. [...] In jazz, too, came the first public appearance of *Negroes*, the manifestation and the myth of black Edens which were to lead me to Africa and, beyond Africa, to ethnography. (1992:109.)

Leiris's account of his discovery of jazz in Montmartre comprises traces of what Meltzer calls 'a white mythology of jazz' (1993:12). A panacea for bourgeois ennui, *jazz* becomes for Leiris 'the vibrant sign' (1984:109) under which he actualizes his sexuality and in the space of which he configures an ontological alternative to the 'dying civilization' of Europe. The alienated and introverted Leiris discovers, in the jazz subculture of Paris, a sense of communion in and through the seeming 'otherness' of jazz music, musicians and fans. In Leiris's account, this 'otherness' is created in a range of (mis)readings of blackness and becomes, in the resultant discursive configurations, a site of potential discovery and of liberation. What makes the 'white mythology' Leiris wields in *Manhood* so compelling is his literalization of journeys that, in most texts, remain narrative or figural. Having experienced the 'otherness' of jazz (through and in a discovery of blackness), Leiris set out in search of the territory of regenerative liberty he saw it as heralding. His travels in North Africa, footsteps replacing tropes, were attempts to discover this place: an existential desire for difference had become the need for a new epistemology.

What is this journey to the 'other side'? In any number of texts which use jazz as a site of 'otherness' (and they are legion, perhaps accounting for the bulk of jazz literature), Leiris's journey is replicated. Characters, narrators and commentators set out to discover difference, to uncover a form of being-in-the-world which is, despite (or because of) the risks its discovery entails, therapeutic. For Leiris, like many of the French *avant-garde* 'slummers,' jazz 'became the paradigmatic object' of this mode of being (Gendron 1990:21). In these representations, jazz comes to stand for an alternative ontology and, by extension (like Leiris turning to anthropology), is used to propagate a different method of acquiring and advancing knowledge. This 'different knowledge' is regularly oppositional: it stands against tradition, against the disciplines of Western learning. It can, for this reason, be argued that these representations (of jazz as a cultural practice arrayed against hegemonic European values and

aesthetics) are hardly representations of jazz itself. They speak, rather, to a perceived stifling of individual expression and of human desire by the sheer weight of European cultural and aesthetic history. They look to the seeming 'otherness' of jazz (located as much in blackness as in musical difference) to redeem or renew cultures seen as languishing under the oppressive weight of their pasts. The narrative or tropic journey constitutes simultaneously the point of departure and the place of arrival.

In the remainder of this section, I shall be looking at the ways in which representations of jazz configure both it and the societies and values it is represented as opposing. These are maps of journeys like those of Leiris: from the familiar, through existential rebellion, to an alternative dream-space of self-actualization. The quoted section from *Manhood* provides an interesting departure point for considering the mapping performed by the narrative, the designation of an alternative ontological realm to which one travels. Its overt use of the tropes of religious festival, of bacchanalian celebrations which culminate in a communion of celebrants, is typical of representations of jazz as the Dionysian contrary of the Apollonian clarity of Western rationalism and restraint. This move, beyond the confines of the classical and balanced to a state of energetic excess, is the scaffold of so many jazz literary texts that it warrants consideration at some length. Since it provides both an epistemological schema and incorporates a means of approaching the impetus behind later versions of Africanism, I begin with a brief synopsis of some contemporary comments on that *Ur-text* of the Dionysian – Apollonian binary, Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956).

Nietzsche's bipolar analysis of art cannot be subsumed by his own critique of its Hegelian aspect, its supposed collapse into the 'broad dialectics of the German' (Nietzsche 1956:7). Despite arguing in favour of a synthesis of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, *The Birth of Tragedy* compensates for the historical repression of the Dionysian spirit by situating it at the centre of its mythopoesis. The marginalized (often excluded) element of the binary, in a move reminiscent of Derrida's early analyses,¹ is elevated beyond the possibility of

¹ See Derrida, Jacques. 1998. *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

dialectical synthesis. Dionysus in Nietzsche, like the embodiments of energy in Blake's poetry, is a primary *force* of which any particular *form* is an inadequate and incomplete manifestation. These forms are, to use Haar's useful formulation, 'always surfaces and masks' (1988:26), beneath which lurks the irrepressible and unlimited energy of ecstasy. Deleuze (1983:196) asserts that the Hegelian dialectic substitutes negation for the affirmation of difference. Dionysus, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, has no contrary adequate to negate his life-affirming energy. Instead, the bacchanalian god is always in excess of the forms in which he is partially and fleetingly embedded. Endlessly different from the forms that would contain him, Dionysus is also always different from himself, existing as a multivalent opponent of conformity and predictability. His is an identity in flux, always dividing, constantly disturbing, persistently recognizable in his capacity to disrupt, redefine or destroy.

In the wake of the post-structuralist exaltation of Nietzsche as a 'prophet of extremity'² and the good press that Nietzsche's Dionysus has received in modernist and post-modern writing, many contemporary theoreticians emphasise that no simple valorisation of the Dionysian over the Apollonian occurs anywhere in Nietzsche.³ The one cannot exist without the other: nowhere can Dionysus be seen except mediated through Apollonian representations. Furthermore, the Apollonian veil, constantly regenerated to contain the incursions of Dionysus into the space of the image, is renewed specifically *because* of Dionysian eruption. The economy between the Dionysian and the Apollonian is, thus, reciprocal and intricate. When one comes to look at writing which characterizes a journey into the realm of Dionysus, it is necessary to remain aware of this economy. The very act of writing about the Dionysian, to set about expressing its nature, is to incorporate it into an Apollonian system of linguistic encapsulation, to perform a semantic confinement. Sloterdijk makes the important point that an

Apollonian principle governs the antagonism between the Apollonian and the

² See Megill, Allan. 1985. *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*. London: University of California Press.

³ See Schulte-Sasse's foreword to Sloterdijk, Peter. 1989. *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: ix-xxiv.

Dionysian. This permits us to understand why Nietzsche, although he presents himself as the herald of the Dionysian, at the same time perpetually appears with the demeanour of heroic self-control. [...] Apollo is, even within Nietzsche himself, the ruler in the antithetical relationship with the Other. (1989:25)

No narrative or figurative reaching towards the Dionysian does so on its own terms, for a world divided into succinct labelled parts is anathema to the boundless energy of Dionysus (the intrinsic aspect of whom is the destruction of the boundaries that individuate both concepts and human beings). It is, as will emerge in the later discussion of music and excess, more than simple abstraction to suggest, after Sloterdijk, that attempts to represent the Dionysian are trapped endlessly in the Apollonian. No matter how one reaches towards the presence of the god of 'otherness', one does so always through the fragmented surface of signification whose basis is the containment (and safe channelling) of the forces that constantly threaten it. All discussions of the Dionysian which ensue carry the implicit qualification that this re-presentation of representations of the Dionysian is caught in an inevitable double Apollonian bind. It is, nevertheless, necessary to continue an attempted map of Dionysus' realm, for in it we might find a means by which to understand the different ontology for which jazz is taken to stand.

A lurking and formless force, Dionysus disfigures difference by releasing it from the 'constraints within which metaphysics would control it' (Sallis 1991:42). He, thus, remains the irrepressible manifestation of an alterity which is at once beyond control and a motivation for the emergence of systematic restraint. The very multivalency of the signifier *Dionysus* resides in this irrepressible 'otherness': it stands as the antithesis of conceptual definition (for definition is the realm of Apollonian clarity or the enactment of some metaphysical gesture) and would stand for 'difference itself, difference as such' (Sallis 1991:42) were it not for the fact that the signifier also stands for 'the very disruption of the limits that would determine the *itself* and the *as such*' (Sallis 1991:42). Since Dionysus evades definition (is the antithesis of definition), he is known rather by the manifestations of difference he embodies, by the ruptures which mark his passage across the surface of thinking and being. These manifestations are signposted, as in Nietzsche's own writing, as excess and opposition.

Dionysus *is* formless transgression of that which seeks to deny his existence and power. He is defined by that which he opposes; he is the 'other' of systems that would curtail being by imposing metaphysical schema on the individual; he is the enemy of logic, discipline and ascetic reflection; he is the nemesis of abstention, of altruism and of civilization. He is the (figurative and literal) noise against which the harmony of the world is defined. Yet, in that noise lies every potential music we might uncover. For it is that cacophonous presence that we curtail in scales, organize in melodies, divide into keys, and structure into chord progressions.

The threat of Dionysus, set out with almost rapturous vitriol in Plato's *The Republic* (1966) and *The Laws* (1970), is most vivid for his classical detractors in the ecstatic rituals through which the god was worshipped. Seen as the complete abrogation of rationalism, these festivals were the performance of ecstasy, a stepping outside of the routine confines of selfhood. In Freudian terms, the practice of the Dionysian mysteries entailed a suspension of the *superego* and a submersion in the libidinal *id*. This inversion of the Platonic ideal of selfhood (which, of course, denigrates the appetitive and places it wholly under the control of rationality) destabilises the *ego*, threatening the accepted notions of a delineated identity distinct from the identities of others. In the bacchanalian festivals, revellers were (by all accounts, including that of Euripides⁴) transported beyond the confines of individuality: the 'essential unit is not the isolated individual but the group in action, which manifests its collective energy through the throbbing patterns of song, dance and orgiastic sex' (Evans 1988:84). It is 'the disruption of limits that would delimit the individual' (Sallis 1988:4) that was contrary to the Socratic principle of individuation rooted in the capacity (in fact, obligation) of a particular mind to reason. The collapse of reason occurs in the presence of an overwhelming 'excess of energy' (Nietzsche 1968:108) and, as the mediating function of the rational mind disappears, the individual is exposed to unfiltered experience. The Apollonian configurations of truth are rent violently asunder to reveal the embodied oneness of humankind united in life-affirming and instinctual gratification. This is a realm in which the individual, made ill through the repression of desire, is re-sensualized and healed by

⁴ Euripides. 1970. *The Bacchae*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice – Hall.

overcoming individuality.⁵ Interestingly, the movement beyond the ego is simultaneously a movement beyond metaphysics, or more provocatively stated, to a condition described by Sallis, in his remarkable essay of the same title, as 'in excess of metaphysics' (1988:11). It is 'in excess of metaphysics' because the relocation of the self into a wild corporeality cannot be contained by any doctrine; its pure physicality protects the altered state from reduction to any doctrinal categories of transcendence. Seduced into exteriority, the Dionysian reveller seems intoxicated, is caught up in the narcosis of immediacy and hedonism.

'So closely was Dionysus associated with [...] wild dances that he was known in antiquity as the Lord of the Dance and the Giver of Ecstasy' (Evans 1988:56). Nietzsche, in his characterization of the Dionysian festivals, discusses the music which could induce in celebrants the impulse to dance away from rationality. In order to describe this music, he distinguishes it from its contrary. Apollonian music is 'the Doric architecture of sound' (Nietzsche 1956:23), characterized by routine rhythm, regularity and restraint. Its rhythm is temperance and its form conspicuously regular. In its regularity it reassures rather than disconcerts. It is the antithesis of Dionysian music, which induces wild excitement and the fragmentation of the rational self. Dionysian music 'spread abroad terror and a deep shudder' in Athens (Nietzsche 1956:23) because it 'makes every phenomenon comprehensive and significant' (1956:23) without the intercession of detached Apollonian contemplation. It reveals the fundamentals of the world without the anaesthetic protection of the 'truths' which constitute the veil of Apollonian illusion. The Dionysian musician, 'by identifying himself with the primitive echo of the world,' is able to achieve what the lyric poet strives to achieve 'without having to resort to images' (Kofman 1993:8).

In privileging music over language, Nietzsche at once reiterates the problem of writing about an anathema of language and establishes music as a potentially direct expression of the Dionysian. Writing, no matter how closely its aphoristic and metaphorical dance

⁵ For a detailed analysis of the 'healing potential' and psychotherapeutic consequences of Nietzsche's version of the Dionysian see Stauth, Georg & Turner, Bryan S. 1988. *Nietzsche's Dance: Resentment, Reciprocity and Resistance in Social Life*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell: 28–32.

approximates the musical, is always trapped in the world of appearance. Music, at least, is beyond language; liberated from the machinations of signification and the contingencies of exegesis, it can express the transgressive spirit of Dionysus directly. In doing so, it expresses not simply a delight in liberation, but also the simultaneous pain of loss entailed in the translation of the individual across the borders of a succinct and manageable self.

Dionysian music expresses what the Dionysian cry expresses, the pathos of the rupturing of the individual being. That is why although Nietzsche keeps trying to find the essence of music in the 'incomparable power of harmony' in the end it is in musical *dissonance* that he discovers the Dionysian essence of music, as the element that figures, within music, the failure of music to give form to the experience of the irretrievable loss of all form. (Staten 1990:210.)

Dionysian music, then, is not the finely patterned, symmetrical or balanced. It is, rather, music which suggests the 'loss of all form' and the persistence of force. To return to one of Attali's (1985) central theses: Dionysian music has an intrinsic relation to noise, to the rejection or collapse of sonic form. In this relation it reveals the constructed nature of harmony: it demonstrates that order is an imposition, that the disorder of the world is constantly only a discord away. In this, too, we see the dual nature of Dionysus: the simultaneous faces of liberation and threat. Perhaps no liberation comes without the destruction of totalizing forms, but that destruction entails anguish even while its consequence is liberty. The destruction of the *principium individuationis* in the course of the Dionysian ritual is, then, a painful recognition of illusory truth *as* illusion. The noises off-stage reveal the action on-stage to be just so much strutting in an arena created more for safety than with integrity.

Nietzsche reveals a primitivist nostalgia in his rendition of Homeric Greece. In a romanticism not unlike that of Montaigne, Diderot, Morelly and Rousseau, he yearns for an

alternative to the Christian *ressentiment* against life,⁶ believing that such an alternative did once exist. If it exists in our world, Nietzsche maintains, it must exist among those peoples unafflicted by the 'civilizing' impact of Socratic thought. The 'savage', conceived of historically or geographically, is a site of ontological hope since he or she exists uncurtailed by the brutal impact of Apollonian rationalism. Civilization, for Nietzsche, is repression; therefore, to uncover the implications of an absence of repression, one must seek out the 'uncivilized'. Turning his disgruntled gaze away from Wagner, whom Nietzsche considered to have belied the promise of reinvigorating German culture through a return to primitive Teutonic myth, he found in the 'Moorish dance' from *Carmen* an incursion of Dionysus into the modern world.

The music is lively, but its liveliness is neither French nor German. Its liveliness is African. [...] And how this Moorish dance speaks to us so tranquilly! How even our instability learns satiety from its lewd melancholy! Finally we have a love that has been transposed back to nature. Not the love of some 'higher virgin'! No sentimentality! Rather love as fate, as fatality, cynical, without guilt, cruel - and as a result just like nature. (Nietzsche, quoted in Jones 1994:77.)

The primitivist impulse which motivates the nostalgic rendering of Homeric Greece reasserts itself in this characterization. Free of Christian *ressentiment* (his is not the repressive love of some 'higher virgin'), the 'African' becomes the screen onto which Nietzsche would project his desire for an embodiment of instinctual participation in reality, an immersion in unmediated experience. The 'African' has not 'suffered the transformation of savage emotions by an etiquette of everyday [European] behaviour' (Stauth and Turner 1988:32). Nietzsche's primitivism is based on a perception of civilization analogous to Freud's: civilization is bought at the cost of curtailment of desire, through a systematic mutilation of the libido. The fabric of discourse (the realm of the image), which is a precondition and legacy of 'civilization', is the means by which that curtailment and limitation is effected. The

⁶ The phrase 'Christian *ressentiment*', taken from Nietzsche, is analysed comprehensively by Stauth and Turner (1988:110).

'African' comes to represent, for Nietzsche, the embodiment of pre-linguistic desire. Jones (1994:77–8) demonstrates, albeit from a disparaging fundamentalist Christian perspective, that Nietzsche conflates the Dionysian reveller and the 'African' in his formulation of an alternative to repressed and repressive European culture. Stated differently, Nietzsche makes of the bacchic mysteries and the 'dark continent' mythological allies.

'Names are never learned alone, but lodged within little stories' (Lyotard, quoted in Wall 1990:57). Nietzsche lodges the name 'Dionysus' in an array of narratives in several texts, ranging widely in search of stories that will give the Dionysian landscape a recognizable form. He resorts to any number of *metaphorai* to traverse that landscape, calling into being gods and their domains on every journey. My protracted exegesis of this landscape (which nevertheless does it little justice) performs three distinct functions in this analysis. First, it provides a vocabulary for addressing those representations of jazz which undertake narrative and tropic journeys analogous to that of Nietzsche (and, as mentioned earlier, many jazz narratives are journeys to the 'other side' of a version of Western rationalism). Secondly, the status and function Nietzsche accords music is a useful reference point in discussions of the significance ascribed to jazz in literary representations. While Nietzsche carefully crafts an epistemology which gives art an ontogenetic status, jazz fans are prone to doing so with rather less meticulous attention to detailed argument. Nietzschean analyses provide a basis for understanding claims made in the heat of representing jazz performances; certainly they provide a sound method for taking some of the claims made in the name of jazz seriously. Finally, but hesitantly, I would claim that Nietzsche's Dionysus is a direct genealogical ancestor of many of the discursive traces constitutive of representations of jazz. His Dionysus and jazz are twin-born children of Modernism and, while, in the absence of detailed substantiation such analytical leaps are hardly defensible, both might emanate from the same cultural *episteme*. There are tempting continuities among versions of Modernism (explored by, among others, Torgovnick 1990), many clustered around renditions of the primitive. The stories I examine, are, perhaps, as much stories *about* Dionysus as about jazz, as much narratives of the creation of modernity (and the post-modern) as they are stories about Dionysus. The landscape is at once dotted with signs and bears infinite traces of narrative journeys.

John Wain's *Strike the Father Dead*, published in 1962, may seem a rather obscure novel with which to begin a review of jazz in literature. It is, though, a useful starting point for two reasons. First, its plot is typical of early jazz narratives: a young man leaves suburban complacency to encounter the dangerous, but liberating, subculture of jazz in the course of which journey he uncovers his own creativity and a different set of lived realities. It repeats the *bildungsroman* aspect and the narrative map of the first (published) jazz novel, Dorothy Baker's *Young Man with a Horn* (1938)⁷ and parallels those manifold autobiographical accounts of discovering jazz (such as Leiris's discovery in Montmartre). *Strike the Father Dead* seems, therefore, to be representative of many narratives of rebellion and liberation in jazz writing. The second motivation for beginning with Wain's *Strike the Father Dead* is its use of the myths of antiquity to establish and depict difference: its binary structure is embedded in tropes of Homeric legend, and the text functions, therefore, as a bridge between the figural language of Nietzsche and the world of jazz fiction.

The novel has three narrators: Alfred, who holds a Chair in Classics at a university in a small industrial town and whose life is structured around the values of 'rectitude, self-denial and a quiet conscience' (1962:11); Jeremy, his 'rebellious' son who breaks from the confines of middle-class suburbia to discover, in jazz, an alternative to the repressive order of his father's domesticity; and Eleanor, Alfred's sister, who is at once an observer of the conflict between two world-views and a mediator in her role of surrogate wife and mother to the two men.

Jeremy initiates his rebellion (rather melodramatically, it must be said) by ripping apart the

⁷ Interestingly Baker's novel tells a story that includes many elements which come to be basic to the 'jazz life' narratives of later periods. Rick Martin is a self-taught musician – he woodsheds on pianos in deserted church halls – who becomes a trumpet-playing 'sensation, particularly among musicians' (1938:10). He discovers a mentor in a black trumpeter with the (crushingly) allegorical name, Art Hazard. Rick Martin dedicates himself to the pursuit of 'music that comes right out of the genuine urge' (1938:12), rather than the music that is 'turned out sweet in hotel ballrooms' (1938:11-12). It is this dedication that makes Martin, in the romantic existential mould, 'an artist, burdened with that difficult baggage, the soul of an artist' (1938:14). In a typical 'jazz life' pattern, Martin drinks himself to death in 'the gap between [his] musical ability and his ability to fit it to his own life' (1938:11), caught in the 'difference between the demands of expression and the demands of life here below' (1938:11).

Greek grammar from which he has been studying and hurling it into a muddy pond. His avid studying, even while riding his bicycle through the countryside during vacation time, is a consequence of his father's expectations and Jeremy's desire not to disappoint him. He tears apart the grammar 'as if some power quite independent of [his] own will had taken possession of [his] body and directed its movements' (1962:35). The 'murder in [his] heart,' though is 'not murder of a person, but of a way of life' (1962:36). Mirroring, in a rather domestic variation, the bacchic revellers dismembering Dionysus, Jeremy's destructive gesture obliterates the duties and responsibilities that would contain him. Earlier in the novel, Alfred says of his (modest) university: ' "Not here, O Apollo, are haunts meet for thee." Mercury, perhaps. But in any event, not Bacchus' (1962:7). It is the bacchanalian spirit which intrudes, both in Jeremy's rejection of his father's priorities (the prescriptive order of the grammarian is violently rent) and in his energetic performance, when he arrives home, of a Jeremy Coleman piece on the piano. Greek grammar gives way to 'the fierce life that pulsed through [Coleman's chords]' (1962:37) and Jeremy experiences an exhilaration he describes as 'sheer drunkenness' (1962:39). He portrays his state of liberty when playing as being 'like a new strength: as if you suddenly grew wings' (1962:39) and describes wanting to play 'Memphis Blues' 'the way a bird wanted to take off in a dead straight line' (1962:39). These images of flight (and images of Dedalus-like flight beyond the labyrinths of convention are ubiquitous in jazz writing) are expressions of an enraptured transcendence of the discipline, control and pedantry of the world of his father.

That same evening, Jeremy wanders into 'the Olympia, or the Plaza, or something like that' (1962:43). Initially mulling over the his father's version of excitement, that the ancient Greeks could 'rock him in his seat just by using the digamma at an unexpected moment' (1962:42), Jeremy finds himself 'lost' in the music:

an hour or so passed in what, for me, was a state of bliss. Just to see a real drummer thumping on real drums, a real bass player plucking real strings and sometimes twirling his instrument round in the approved fashion, a couple of real trumpeters picking up different kinds of mute, and what-not – it was rapture. (1962:46-7)

It is these enraptured translocations (these movements outside of himself) to which Jeremy becomes addicted, which come to stand in his mind for 'the real' which has been silenced by his father's Apollonian strictures. During the interval, Jeremy fills in for the pianist (much to the pianist's annoyance – which he expresses by beating Jeremy senseless after the set). For the first time Jeremy appreciates his power to induce joy in an audience and this realization makes him ecstatic: 'Yes, *dancing. To me*' (1962:49). The combination of his rapture and his discovery of a special competence fills Jeremy with a confidence that leads him into his first sexual assignation. This sequence of events parallels Leiris's *Manhood: From Childhood to the Fierce Order of Virility*. In that text, Leiris is so affected by the seeming transgression of the performance of Josephine Baker, that he (in his ecstasy and drunkenness) has the confidence to initiate his first sexual encounter (1984:119). Jazz is, for both Leiris and Jeremy, a marker and, in a direct way, an instigator of sexual expression. Sadly (for those involved), both Leiris's encounter with Kay and Jeremy's with Lucille are marred by drunken impotence. Even in the realm of Dionysus, it would seem, one has to pace oneself. There is, though, a serious aspect to the way in which both men are overwhelmed by their new-found liberty. Both experience what might be considered an ontological shift in the face of jazz: it is as if the new-found rapturous liberation has no limits and, as a consequence, neither Jeremy nor Michel Leiris is left knowing how to *be* in the spaces that open up within them. The collapse of the delimiting boundaries of identity is also a destabilising crisis of selfhood: ecstasy brings with it a fundamental disorientation. Cast out of the Apollonian clarity of the structured authority under which they have lived, both enter a realm of literal and existential intoxication, are left floundering outside the predictable and disciplined context in which they have hitherto lived. Versions of desirous excess seem, in some ways, to cancel each other out. It is as if the breaking of 'mind-forg'd manacles' results in both the freedom to run (even fly) *and* the inevitability of stumbling.

Jeremy runs away to London without completing his schooling, an act which alienates him from his father until the novel's *denouement*. Avoiding the draft in wartime London, Jeremy meets Percy, an African American soldier fresh from the stage of Minton's on West 118th Street, New York. Percy is a cutting-edge jazz musician described by Jeremy in adulatory but noticeably primitivist terms: his appearance is that of 'a great barbarian warleader', he is a

'force of Nature' (1962:132-3) and he possesses 'an imperial dignity with a code all of his own' (1962:133). Percy becomes Jeremy's guide in the world of jazz, his new father in the world of instinctual and inexplicably expressive music. Percy's playing is described by Jeremy, in various ways, as 'beyond words', his narration performing endless *aposiopeses* as it unfolds. He portrays the process of understanding Percy's jazz (and learning to participate in it) as visceral: 'we were learning with our ears, our hands, our muscles; we couldn't have put it into musical terminology' (1962:130). Learning from Percy amounts to learning to feel, rather than learning to think.

The depiction of Percy, while by no means an extreme instance of a reprehensible tendency in jazz writing, bears many rhetorical traces of primitivism. Giambattista Vico, in *La Scienza Nuova*, published in 1725, was the first writer to provide a 'systematic' account of the 'primitive' mind.

Hence poetic wisdom, the first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who, without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination [...] for they were furnished by nature with these senses and imaginations. [...] Before, in the time of Homer, the people, who were almost all body and almost no reflection, must have been all vivid sensation in perceiving particulars, strong imagination in apprehending and enlarging them [...] and robust memory in retaining them. (Vico, quoted in Connelly 1995:14.)

For Vico, as for Nietzsche, the primitive is primarily an embodied being whose experience is formed by the passions and physical senses without the 'mediation of abstract ideas' (Connelly 1995:14). Primitives feel rather than think. Designating the 'primitive' *irrational* facilitated the figural equivalence between 'primitivism' and disorder, for 'primitive' peoples (the theory would have it) live tossed about on the ocean of desire without transcendent rationality as an anchor. It is because of this unanchored physicality and consequent disorder that 'primitives' are 'the marginalia to the rational text, the darkness that fell just outside the

aureole of the light of reason, the bestial, lusty satyr that by contrast heightened the proportioned beauty and the sober intellect of Apollo' (Connelly 1995:13). There is, of course, another alternative. Rather than a victim of unrestrained desire, the 'primitive' can be configured as representing Edenic naturalism. In this rendering, primitives are 'naturals' rather than 'savages'. Closer to the original state of humanity, primitives embody an uncorrupted innocence and, in their nobility, present us with an alternative to a state of being corrupted by political and economic power wielded, through the millennia, in the name of civilization. These two versions of the primitive, while seemingly mutually exclusive, exist in complex combinations in texts. *Strike the Father Dead* is no exception: Percy is a cloth woven from a complex array of primitive threads and it is this complex primitivism which makes him the embodiment of the spirit of jazz. He is the 'noble savage'; with an equal emphasis on both terms.

It is not only Percy who is an entranced 'primitive' when he performs. The drummer in the band with which Percy guests, on the occasion of Jeremy's hearing him for the first time, is transported: 'his eyes were glazed and he looked on the point of falling asleep, but the sound from his drums was lifting the whole room into the air' (1962:130). Jeremy realizes the significance of Percy's playing as he too is shifted beyond a rational understanding of musical performance: 'I knew it all in a dim, lost, dream-like way [...] It was several seconds before I could bring myself back to full consciousness of what was going on (1962:130-1). The epiphany for Jeremy is the power of jazz to move the performer (and listener) to a state of being recognizable precisely by the extent to which it eludes description, to which it is the 'other' of language. Here is the absolute contrary of Alfred's world: a world in which emotional impulse and desire are valorized precisely because of their capacity to liberate individuals from the categorical imperatives and semantics of language.

Later in the novel, Jeremy finds his way to Paris where he encounters the French *avant-garde* jazz milieu, whose pantheon of bebop gods includes Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis. Jeremy sees Paris, through the spectacles of English parochialism, as a world of exotic foreigners committed to hedonism and sensation: 'all around us the tide of Paris will swirl, that gay, fierce, lyrical, savage, electric tide that gathers everyone up and floats them

onward through paradise' (1962:193). Temporarily away from the guiding influence of Percy, though, Jeremy's playing lapses into routine. The liberatory potential of the place fails to sustain the discoveries he has made. In the absence of his 'new father', even the bacchanalian ambience of Paris is worthless. Luckily, Percy and Jeremy are reunited in a London club. Percy comes on stage surreptitiously while Jeremy is playing prosaically and, with his new band members, transforms the set into the mode of jazz which has been eluding Jeremy. The description of the set, which represents the musical pinnacle of the novel, warrants discussion. Percy takes a fifteen-minute solo about which Jeremy states, 'I listened with my spine, with my belly, my heels and toes, and above all with my fingers' (1962:254). The solo causes Jeremy to reassess everything he has been playing up to that point: 'All at once I saw over the top of the stuff I had been playing' (1962:255). The textures of Percy's musical ideas draw Jeremy back to the moment of casting the Greek grammar into the pond, for now he is about to cast off once more the ennui of routine, and once again it is music that offers the passage to 'the other side'. 'Once more nothing could save me but music' (1962:255) and the rescue is effected in another ecstatic movement under the mark of Dionysus.

My fever mounted. [...] I wanted to boil over, and the rolling medium paced beat had come to sound gluey. I got up a good pace and just turned it loose. Sweat poured off me and I kept seeing livid spots, but I didn't care if I had a heart attack; I was perfectly willing to beat my brains out if there was no other way. [...] I began to let some sound come out of my mouth, to add to the general bonanza. (1962:255)

Jeremy plays possessed by the spirit of a newly-learnt expressivity. The music takes over, in the real sense of displacing conscious reflection, and leaves him in a state to which the audience too has been transported: 'they just about went out of their minds' (1962:255). The ecstatic displacement manifests itself in a violent unsettling of the body and a desire to scream over and above the tide of sound. In Apollonian terms this is mere chaos; in Dionysian terms this is the excess in which individuation recedes and in which the embodied celebrant shouts his identity into the cacophony of the community. This is a gateway to a new state of being, and in passing through that gate, the celebrant is transformed. All at once,

Jeremy's ennui lifts as his faith in the music, the community which it facilitates and the life-affirming energy it celebrates is restored.

The reconciliation between Jeremy and his father occurs when Jeremy has been hospitalized after being assaulted by racist thugs because of his friendship with Percy. Alfred comes to respect Jeremy precisely because he has been injured in the noble cause of protecting a friend, an event which evokes Alfred's memories of a friendship and a tragic series of events in the Great War. It is Alfred who compromises and comes to accept the validity of the alternative Jeremy has embraced. The reconciliation occurs in the presence of Percy, the victorious contender for Jeremy's soul, who, gracious in victory, understands Alfred's need to be guided through the alterity for which jazz stands. It is the friendship between Jeremy and Percy which wins Alfred over. Their friendship, it must be remembered, emerges in the spaces created by the collapse of boundaries between individuals in the course of improvised performance. The reconciliation, inspired by the Dionysian communality thus achieved, is nevertheless mediated precisely by Percy's capacity for decidedly Apollonian exegesis.

Strike the Father Dead is an allegorical contest between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, and an appropriately Nietzschean union is enacted at its conclusion. The geometry of the narrative, the spaces it demarcates and the journeys across those spaces which it maps, are basic to the landscape of literary jazz. What sets this novel apart from much jazz writing is that the spaces are signposted by neither *overtly* political nor religious markers. We can see the text, in its greater abstraction of the alterity of jazz, as offering a rendition of a theme which can be compared to other variations. Using the emphatic binarism of *Strike the Father Dead* as a patina, the remainder of this chapter concerns repetitions (with difference) in other texts of concepts which can be broadly grouped beneath the banners of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Wain's (compelling) novel is not, in this move, being accorded a founding status; rather it is being used as a chart, a means of navigating a course through the representations of that music described by Jeremy as 'full of terror, indignation and happiness' (1962:255) – a music so distinct in its implications that Jeremy cries out during a performance, in an enunciation of identity not unlike those of the Aboriginal ancestors, '*This is jazz*' (1962:255).

Jeremy is a rather domestic (and English) version of the hipster hero who rebels against the staid conventions of bourgeois existence. The novels of Jack Kerouac are a far more flagrant celebration of bacchanalian hedonism similarly motivated. In Kerouac's literary world it is bebop that provides a model for liberation; jazz clubs are regularly the sites in which his ideals of experiential momentum and existential force are realized. The model which jazz provides for Kerouac's style has been commented on extensively – particularly his 'improvisation' of *On the Road* (published initially in 1957) on a giant roll of paper which allayed the need to break the flow of composition.⁸ Lauding spontaneity in all things, Kerouac was drawn to the provisionality and immediacy of jazz improvisation as a model for the composition of prose. This aesthetic, perhaps the most important incorporation of jazz in Beat writing, is beyond the scope of this analysis. What concerns me are the particular representations of jazz and its performance in Kerouac's *On the Road*.⁹

The following account of a performance by an unnamed tenor sax player is typical of both the affective value Kerouac accords jazz and of his stylistic method for approaching its intensity.

The behatted tenorman was blowing at the peak of a wonderfully satisfactory free idea, a rising and falling riff that went from 'EE-yah!' to a crazier 'EE-de-lee-yah!' and blasted along to the rolling crash of butt-scarred drums hammered by a big brutal Negro with a bullneck who didn't give a damn about anything but punishing his busted tubs, crash, rattle-ti-boom, crash. Uproars of music and the tenorman *had it* and everybody knew he had it. Dean was clutching his head in the crowd, and it was a mad crowd. They were all urging that tenormen to hold it and keep it with cries and wild eyes, and he was raising himself from a crouch and going down again with his

⁸ For a discussion of Kerouac and spontaneity, see Everson, William. 1981. Dionysus and the Beat Generation and Four Letters on the Archetype, in *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, edited by Lee Bartlett. London: Jefferson: 181–194.

⁹ Jazz also features extensively in Kerouac's *The Subterraneans* (1995), which details the exploits of a group of bohemians for whom jazz is iconic of the freedom they seek, and in his *Desolation Angels* (1990), in which jazz is a touchstone in the protagonist's introspective journey home from his isolation on Desolation Peak.

horn, looping it up in a clear cry above the furore. (1991:197)

Kerouac's *On the Road* is suffused with such breathless accounts of the ecstasy of listening to jazz. The 'behatted tenorman' transforms Dean Moriarty into a rapturous celebrant of an arcane knowledge: 'Dean was in a trance [...] he had [become] a madman who not only understood but cared and wanted to understand more' (1991:198). The Beat *it*, that concealed and elusive (but recognizable) apocalyptic force, jolts Moriarty's consciousness out of the mundane and links him, through ecstasy, with the tradition of the Dionysian. His is the combined joy and pain of the reveller wrenched from the safety of illusion and thrust into the presence of an omnipotent, but unnameable force which cuts through the complacency of consciousness and the myth of individuation. The disruption of the *principium individuationis* is apparent as the 'mad crowd' is united in its saturnalian cries, as it stares collectively through 'wild eyes'.

Dean's ecstasy is in emulation of another hipster in the novel, Rollo Greb. He says of Greb, '...that's what I want to be. I want to be like him' (1991:127), an intention formed as he watches Greb react to a recorded performance of Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray blowing 'The Hunt'.

[Greb's] excitement blew out of his eyes in stabs of fiendish light. He rolled his neck in spastic ecstasy. He lisped, he writhed, he flopped, he moaned, he howled, he fell back in despair. (1955:127)

Dean bursts into uncontrolled affirmation of Greb's manifest possession by the spirit of jazz, 'Yes...Yes...Yes' (1991:127). So too does he cry out at the tenorman – and at George Shearing (1991:128) and Slim Galliard (1991:176-7) at other points in the narrative. These uncontrolled bursts of affirmation suggest an instinctual gratification, a wild excitement at confronting a universal force that 'makes every phenomenon comprehensive and significant' (Nietzsche 1956:23). All that remains in the face of this unspeakable truth is the ecstatic affirmation of its presence and its power.

Kerouac's rhetorical struggles to represent the extremity of the rapture and the presence of the *it* parallel Moriarty's own failure of language in the presence of the mind-searing qualities of jazz. Both flounder at the borders of language, lapsing into *aposiopesis* ('the tenorman *had it*'), onomatopoeia ('EE-yah!...EE-de-lee-yah!') and mystical rhetoric. Jazz is beyond representation since both the *it* and the state of ecstasy are in excess of language: all Dean can do is lapse into his hysterically affirmative mantra. This is not the Apollonian ambit of images; it is a condition beyond language, too chaotic and powerful to fall within the categories into which signifiers would seek to divide the world. Jazz, for Kerouac, is about this rupturing of cognition, a destruction which produces insights which are overwhelming in both their magnitude and their implications.

At one point in *On the Road*, Kerouac chooses a godhead for this hedonistic faith. Dean cries out during a performance of the pre-lapsarian Shearing, who later became 'cool and commercial' (1991:128), 'There he is! That's him! Old God! Old God Shearing!'. When Shearing finishes the set, throughout which he has been 'conscious of the madman behind him' (1991:128), Dean points to the empty piano seat: 'God's empty chair' (1991:128). If the 'Old God' can be known by the effect he has on his devotees, then he is none other than Dionysus, for Shearing's playing has truly made of Dean a bacchic reveller. He is given over to a complete embodiment; thrashing about, maddened, ecstatic, enraptured and incapable of lucidity. When he later hears Slim Galliard, Dean stands 'clasping his hands in prayer and sweating' (1991:176). A picture of embodied piety, Dean is worshipping the god who speaks through the triumvirate of musicians who 'identify with the primitive echo of the world without having to resort to images' (Kofman 1993:8).

A central aspect of Beat narratives is the quest to discover in black America an alternative to white bourgeois repression. Throughout *On the Road* there are obvious traces of a 'white mythology of jazz'. But, in jazz literature, the realm of the Dionysian is not only a territory to which white people journey to discover an alternative ontology embodied in a black subculture. Many representations of African American culture (and while such generalizations are dubious, generally by African American writers) deploy the world of jazz as the contrary of the 'respectable' aspect of African American culture itself, as the antithesis

of a committed Protestantism and bourgeois morality represented as characteristic of older generations. Many academic analyses of African American culture consider the seemingly distinct worlds of jazz and Christian 'respectability' as analogous *practices* of cultural accommodation and resistance in a segregated and oppressive society. The jazz club and the church, regularly aligned against each other in the battle for souls, in fiction, are seen as continuous. They are held to emerge from the same impulse for liberation, to be framed by the same history and to evidence similar techniques of insurgency into dominant social systems of meaning.¹⁰ But the difference between the worlds, the 'devil's music' raucously dragging the souls of people away from the control of the righteous, is a recurrent division in jazz writing. Conceivably, though, the continuities identified in theoretical exegesis are responsible for the fluid relation between the two territories. Contrary to the 'white mythology of jazz', the binarism of these texts is far more hesitant: there is a constant sense a reciprocal economy between the demarcated worlds.

A text which contrasts the 'respectable' world of bourgeois values with the raptures of jazz, which is based in the clash between an older world recuperated into protestant morality and a younger world of jazz hedonism, is Langston Hughes's *Not Without Laughter* (published in 1930). It includes, in the chapter 'The Dance',¹¹ the following description of 'Benbow's Famous Kansas City Band':

The banjo scolded in diabolic glee, and the cornet panted as though it were out of breath, and Benbow himself left the band and came out on the floor to dance slowly and ecstatically with a large Indian-brown woman covered with diamonds. [...] 'Whaw! Whaw! Whaw!' mocked the cornet - but the steady tomtom of the drums was no longer laughter now, no longer even pleasant. [...] And under the

¹⁰ A large body of scholarship seeks the continuities in African American culture by tracing the persistence of particular signifyin(g) practices in diverse activities. These studies are addressed later in this dissertation (see LeRoi Jones 1963, Henry Louis Gates 1989, Ben Sidran 1995 and Samuel Floyd 1997).

¹¹ Anthologized in Albert, Richard N. 1990. *From Blues to Bop: A Collection of Jazz Fiction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press: 8–23.

dissolute spell of its own rhythm the music had gone quite beyond itself. The four black men in Benbow's wandering band were exploring depths to which mere sound had no business to go. [...] The odors of bodies, the stings of flesh, and the utter emptiness of soul when all is done – these things the piano and the drums, the cornet and the twanging banjo insisted on hoarsely. (1990:16)

The dancers, enraptured by this performance, become nothing other than '[b]odies sweatily close, arms locked, cheek to cheek, breast to breast [...] quite oblivious each person of the other' (1990:18). Waiting at home for her errant niece to return from the dance, Aunt Harriet Williams sits on the porch 'the Bible open on her lap [...] a bundle of switches on the floor at her feet' (1990:22). At the margins of the saturnalian liberation sit the staunch mechanisms of control that would bring desire to book and beat the libidinally liberated back into the fold governed by the law of the father. The word and the rod conjoin to silence the instinctive and abandoned, to thrash Aunt Harriet's niece back into a world in which souls are not 'empty' and bodies not 'oblivious'. Apollo stands guard, holding aloft the head of the Gorgon to keep the forces of Dionysus at bay.

Subduing the Dionysian is, though, a complex compromise. Many representations of African American culture are of ecstatic dancing towards communal liberation as a means of remembering (re-remembering) an elided past. To marginalise the Dionysian, as Aunt Harriet does, is to curtail a genealogy, to prevent a liberating counter-cultural recalling of Africa in the syncopated sounds of jazz. In these instances, the Dionysian visitation is a healing return of an historically repressed spirit. It may be possible to chart representations of jazz as indicators of *re-definitions* of historical identity, as part of the flux in the journey of cultural becoming. That, though, is beyond the scope of this analysis. Rather, I present (in all of their essentialisation of Africa) selected journeys of identity to an African origin, tropic returns to what one might refer to as an African *wish-scape* of belonging.

Rudolph Fisher's short story, 'Common Meter' (published in 1928)¹², is one of many Harlem Renaissance stories founded on a version of return. It reaches its crescendo in a clash between Fess Baxter's Firemen and Bus William's Blue Devils in the Arcadia Ballroom in Harlem. The contest is 'the jazz championship of the world' (1990:22) and at stake is not only a gold trophy but, according to the ecstatic and salacious crowd, the youngest and most beautiful hostess, Jean Ambrose. Fess contrives jazz sabotage: someone cuts the pigskin of the drums in Bus's band and the 'spine [is] ripped out of their music' (1990:24). In a last ditch attempt, having failed in two numbers, the band is forced into an embodied improvisation: the blues are turned into a shout as each band member drops 'his heel where each bass-drum beat would have come' (1990:26). As the beat takes hold of the crowd, they begin to dance and are transported:

They had been rocked thus before, this multitude. Two hundred years ago they had swayed to the same slow fateful measure, lifting their lamentation to heaven, pounding the earth with their feet, seeking the mercy of a new God through the medium of an old rhythm. [...] They had rocked so a thousand years ago in a city whose walls were jungle, forfending the wrath of a terrible black God who spoke in storm and pestilence, had swayed and wailed to that same slow period, beaten on a wild boar's skin stretched over the end of a hollow tree trunk. [...] [The beat was not] a sound but an emotion that laid hold of their bodies and swung them into the past. (1990:26)

The tempo then increases and the crowd is moved beyond enraptured supplication to an ecstatic 'madness' (1990:27) by the conclusion of the performance.

Harlem Renaissance and early Modernist writing is replete with representations of jazz and performance occasions which are these tropic journeys back through the history of slavery, across the oceans traversed by slave ships, to the Dionysian arousal of African ritual. At the

¹² Anthologized in Breton, Marcela. 1990. *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*. Harmondsworth: Penguin:12–28.

heart of jazz pounds a tomtom which entrances individuals to a state of ecstatic communal expressivity. In performing or dancing to jazz, these representations suggest, submerged histories are reclaimed as individuals are liberated from humanist subjectivity and united in an embodied reclamation of *identity as communal genealogy*. The music becomes what Bhabha (1994:241) calls a '*performative deformative*' practice of counter-cultural memory and historiography. Those grand narratives of culture which have sought to divide individuals and remake them in the image of rational Apollonian clarity are ruptured at the moment that jazz 'make[s] demotic the grander narratives of progress' (Bhabha 1994:246). Literary jazz kicks down the picket fences of humanist historiography by casting the past as communal, brutalized, elided, repressed, and as present. In jazz writing, the Dionysian domain, inhabited by ecstatic dancers, tricksters, devils, and the *orisha*, those riding-horses of the gods of alterity, is also the site of return and recovery. Cyclic journeys through the past to the present, mobilize silenced histories and, in an archaeology of identity, suggest the possibility of communal healing. These journeys of recovery are, however, endlessly re-covered by figurative language in representation – again, the relation to the 'other' (here a lost but recoverable version of the self) is mediated in Apollonian terms.

The binary of desire and discipline, inscribed in jazz literature as contending Apollonian and Dionysian discourses, speaks of the persistent victories of humanist rationality while demonstrating the fragility of its supremacy. The law strives endlessly to contain the body, but desire is always in excess of the law, constantly subverting its capacity to reduce identity to the succinct categories of humanist selfhood. What *remains*, though, when jazz is equated with manifest desire? What are the dangers of reiterating the myth that jazz is unrestrained spontaneity and, as such, is the contrary of all systems that would seek to delimit the individual? What is the danger of even a seemingly constructive use of primitivism?

One consequence of representing jazz in primitivist terms is that it enters an ideological exchange in an essentialised form, making it possible for the advocates of discipline to rail against it in the very terms in which it is embedded. The binary domain of figuration can be entered on the side of discipline: the Dionysian can be situated, not as a site of recovery, but as the figural bedrock of terror at the fragile order of 'civilization' and at the forces which

have to be repressed in order to maintain it. Journeys to the domain in texts are often in the interests of diagnosing, not a history of *deformative* repression, but that which must needs be repressed if we are not to revert to the savage barbarity of pre-rationality. Jacques Attali cites one such instance. The *Revue Musicale*, in 1920, reported that:

Jazz is cynically the orchestra of brutes, with nonopposable thumbs and still prehensile toes, in the forests of Voodoo. It is entirely excess, and for that reason more than monotone; the monkey is left to his own devices, without morals, without discipline, thrown back to all the groves of instinct, showing his meat still more obscene. These slaves must be subjugated, or there will be no more master. Their reign is shameful. The shame is ugliness and its triumph. (in Attali 1977:104.)

The Dionysian domain can be wielded, then, in Darwinian terms which reduce jazz to the sound of an earlier discord, civilization's *dissonance* which exists in our past, and echoes only in the music of the 'undeveloped,' the 'uncivilized'. *Dionysus*, as trace, drags with it numerous fragments of detrimental primitivism which do little justice to the intricacies of the music or to the range of its cultural meanings. To imprecate the god in rhetoric is constantly to run the risk of situating Africans, and by extension African Americans, as devotees of an *old god* of primeval instinct, of forcing them to stay put beneath the signs of the 'primitive' bacchanalian rite and then to interpret jazz in terms of this potentially racist configuration.

The atavism depicted in Ann Petry's 'Solo on the Drums' (in Breton 1990:53–9) is a rather troubling instance of the implications of this mode of figuration. Kid Jones, as he plays his drum solo, is possessed by a primal anger at the loss of his lover. Her parting words, 'I'm leaving' (1990:57), keep recurring in his mind and, in his pique, his drums become the tomtoms of a savage past as he reverts (literally, drums himself back) to a state of being which is violent and unreflective.

The drummer forgot he was in the theatre [...] the drums took him [...] back, and back,

and back, in time and space. [...] He was sending out the news. Grandma died. The foreigner in the litter has an old disease and will not recover. The man from across the big water is sleeping with the chief's daughter. Kill. Kill. Kill. The war goes well with the men with the bad smell and the loud laugh. (1990:57)

This reversion to the 'primitive', to a state of mind comprising unconnected fragments of perception and violent unmediated passions, is a common racist rhetorical figuration, and is employed regularly in polemics against jazz (such as that from *The Revue Musicale*). In its depiction of regression, 'Solo on the Drums', which is not a racist story in any simple sense, creates an impression that Kid Jones possesses a veneer of civilization beneath which lurks the abiding presence of jungle blood-lust. The heart of the black person, it would seem from the story, contains the instinctive desire to fight like an animal for survival. This inclination towards atavistic regression seems to come from a rather proximate history of savagery. A cornerstone of racist primitivism is the social Darwinian notion that, for black people, savagery is a recent past; it exists just around an historical, geographical and psychological corner.

Interestingly, the crisis moment for the cuckolded Kid Jones occurs with the incursion of a folk memory of the abduction of a chief's daughter. A pervasive stereotype of primitivism is that of a man moved to violent anger and savagery when his 'mate' is taken from him. One need only think, by way of example, of Tarzan's response when Jane is abducted by primeval men (or apes) (Torgovnick 1990:51). As Burroughs's villains learn to their detriment (being disembowelled is very detrimental), stealing Jane is a guarantee of a quick and bloody death. Petry's story perpetuates, albeit with the best intentions, this myth of the African savage male prone to recidivism, to returning to a barely repressed state of savagery which continues to exist just beneath the skin.

Nietzsche's Dionysus, like the Dionysus worshipped by slaves and women in the cults of Sabazios and Bakkhos in the eastern Aegean in the fifth century BC, is an ancient god whose suppression is the basis of order and governmentality (Evans 1988:43). In many representations, Dionysus is the god of the 'primitives' (who are the instinctual, the

abandoned, the intuitive) or returns people to a 'primitive' condition. The imbrication of Dionysus and primitivism (each is used to stand for the other in texts and they are often inseparable in demarking similar and related cultural spaces) suggests the need to consider them in conjunction in any analysis of the places accorded to jazz in literature. So many representations of jazz use a mode of primitivism and these uses are as diverse as the phenomenon of primitivism itself. Before continuing, it is appropriate to ask a seemingly inappropriate question. This study concerns the representations of jazz in literature and not the music itself in any purely musicological sense. Nevertheless, this analysis begs the question as to why jazz is aligned with the primitive.

Simon Frith, in *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (1996), argues that a long history of Romanticism exists in defining black culture 'as the body, the other of the bourgeois mind' (1996:127). At the heart of arguments about 'rock, rhythm, and sex' is the extension of this view of embodiment:

The logic here is *not* that African music (and African-derived musics) are more 'physical,' more 'directly' sexual than European-derived musics. Rather, the argument is that because 'the African' is more primitive, more 'natural' than the European, then African music must be more directly in touch with the body, with unsymbolized and unmediated sensual states and expectations. (1996:127)

Frith argues, therefore, that the primitivist representations of the music emerge from a view of the performers (and originators of the music) as primitive. This logic, in which prejudiced preconceptions about African (or diasporic) people become the figural frame of representations of jazz, is an important argument in addressing (mis)representations of the music and in seeking explanations for the basis of jazz mythopoesis.

We should, though, ask the question Frith's argument is intended to answer. Is there anything intrinsic to jazz which facilitates the equivalence between it and primitivism? Ted Gioia's adept analysis of the place of jazz in the French Modernists' theorization and idealization of primitivism (Leiris, of course, being central among them), suggests the connection between

the perceived nature of improvisation and primitive emotionalism. The rhetorical foundation of the equivalence is the supposed 'emotionality and expressivity' of jazz (Berendt 1984:143). To improvise is, according to a dictionary definition, to 'compose, utter, or perform extempore [...] on the spur of the moment' (*The Shorter Oxford* 1978:1037). The popular perception of the improvising musician is that he or she 'makes music out of nothing. [That it is] invented out of thin air' (Perlman and Greenblatt 1981:169). By extension, the musician is represented as reflecting 'intense experience' (Gioia 1995:136), since the wellspring of creativity is emotion, rather than any intellectual reflection on the activity itself. This leads to the perception of jazz as the antithesis of the cold, detached intellectualism of Western art. Jazz, unlike canonized European art, is *true* because it is most immediate to the heart, its honesty undissipated by reflection or convention.

This (mis)conception of improvisation is constitutive of many of the Romantic myths about jazz¹³ – and the extent to which jazz is embedded in Romantic myths (and the affects of this embedding) is integral to any analysis of jazz discourse. The assumed spontaneity of improvisation situates the musician outside of rationality. In this move, jazz becomes represented as music of the heart not the mind. It becomes configured as, not just the opposite of the Apollonian veil of reality, but as directly subversive of Apollo in its celebration of

¹³ Another key rhetorical move in this characterization is to equate jazz *with improvisation* and then to juxtapose it with all (supposedly) composed music. This is obviously a simplification of both the jazz tradition and that loosely referred to as 'Western classical music'. Where, for instance, would one situate George Gershwin, Claude Bolling or Steve Reich? How would one locate the classical ambience and the occasional composed works of the Modern Jazz Quartet, Bobo Stenson or Jan Garbarek? How would one account for the passages in J. S. Bach fugues which allow for improvised transitions, though within narrow parameters? This 'problematic' is made explicit in several compositions by contemporary serious composers. An interesting instance is Gavin Bryars's *By the Vaar* (for solo double-bass, bass clarinet, percussion and strings) on *Farewell to Philosophy* (Phillips Classics, 1996), dedicated to and performed by the legendary jazz bassist Charlie Haden. In the course of the three movements which comprise the work, the solo bass part 'begins with fully written material gradually leading to an extended improvisation' (Bryars: liner note). The supposedly clear distinctions between the composed and improvised, between jazz and other musical methods, are constructed for reasons other than musical accuracy. Their constant reiteration in literary texts is interesting precisely to the extent that they are not located (in any direct analytical sense) in the realities of the music itself.

immediacy and of emotional release. There is no real justification for attempting to dispel the Romantic myths of improvisation here, since it is precisely their reiteration that concerns me. Furthermore, these myths have been emphatically exploded.¹⁴ Some comment on the method of improvisation is, however, useful in establishing the space between musical realities and the literary renditions of improvisation.

Wynton Marsalis, an initially self-appointed but now officially-sanctioned caretaker of the jazz tradition, describes (at every available opportunity) the intellectual processes of performing jazz as equivalent to those of theoretical physics.¹⁵ It is these 'intellectual processes' that Paul Berliner sets about mapping. With a declared intent of countering some of the obstructive myths about jazz, he produced a mammoth text of interviews with performing musicians and a detailed commentary on the implications of improvisers' accounts of their practice.¹⁶ Berliner painstakingly analyses the ways in which musicians reflect on the process of improvisation (how they represent it to themselves in the course of performance and how they represent the process to 'outsiders'). What emerges is that (among the narratives of more Romantic addictions), jazz musicians are addicted to learning and to practising. Far more recurrent than any exaltation of pure spontaneity are accounts of the rigour of learning the language of jazz.

Jazz improvisation, irrespective of the regularity with which musical codes are disrupted, actualizes certain possibilities and creates others. 'In jazz you are improvising within a form' (Marsalis, interview 1996:31). The form, conventionally a chord progression underlying a basic melody, is established and then reinforced, violated, amended or extended in the course of playing. The form, as Marsalis asserts, establishes the parameters within which the musician works. What seems like taking notes from thin air is thus a far more complicated

¹⁴ Arguments to this effect by Gioia (1988), Berliner (1994), Collier (1993) and Frith (1996) are detailed in this chapter.

¹⁵ See Collier 1993:49–70 for a useful and succinct analysis of the *activity* of improvisation which implicitly contextualizes Marsalis's claims.

¹⁶ Berliner, Paul F. 1994. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

process in which the harmonic and melodic potentials of a piece (with constant reference to already-performed works and to the other performing musicians) are actualized. Jazz improvisation, again with a few exceptions, is not characterized by 'anything goes'.

[I]mprovisations are facilitated by [performers'] knowledge of the available harmonic and melodic possibilities and by their technical skill and imagination in combining and recombining these possibilities in novel ways. (Perlman and Greenblatt 1981:182.)

The thinking of the improvising player, it follows, operates on at least two levels: the diachronic and synchronic. Improvisation, regularly represented as immediate and outside of history, articulates musical (and, consequently, cultural) history at every turn. Jazz performances are fabrics woven of an unaccountable array of historical references. To learn to enunciate meaningfully in any language (to offer insights, to claim to be saying something original or even particularly interesting) one has to situate oneself in the tradition of speaking. History aside, to speak well is to perform the intricate syntactical variations, tone changes, shifts in emphasis, to defamiliarize previous utterances and so on. The accomplished speaker has the facility to wield the synchronic structures of the language with litness and confidence. Perlman and Greenblatt (1981:182) make the point that, in much the same way as we differentiate the mediocre, competent, and excellent users of language, we can distinguish the degree of competence of an improvising musician. And competence is, clearly, not instinctual in any functional sense.

What emerges in this brief account of improvisation are the analogies between it and De Certeau's characterization of story-telling. To temporalize and structure sonic 'space' is to traverse it (with reference to previous traversals), establishing sequences, asserting relations, inducing connections. To narrate these journeys (which are themselves ontogenetic) is, then, to walk across the music: to traverse and thereby re-organize a space organized along quite different, even if structurally analogous, lines. The literary representation of improvisation can then be seen as an intervention in music in the same way that walking is an intervention in space: is *utilizes* possibilities, arrays places, excludes options. Primitivism can be understood as a set of representational strategies through which jazz is *used* to tell stories that at once

have everything and nothing to do with the music itself.

Thus far, I have looked at the construction of the textual spaces occupied by jazz in and around markers of racial otherness and have looked at instances of Dionysian ebullience in relation to the cultural doctrines against which they are defined. I have also considered, through the particularities of representing improvisation in primitivist terms, something of the relation of the representational process to its object. This discussion suggests that representation is regularly a *use*, a tactical appropriation of certain aspects (real or imagined) of jazz to specific discursive ends. In this *use* it could, as I discuss later, be considered a demarcation of cultural (historical and political) spaces through narrative improvisation on the music itself. While the political import of such textual constructions has been alluded to, it is useful to consider, in more direct terms, the representations of jazz which make it a carnivalesque opposition to fascist ideologies. In later chapters of this dissertation, I consider the ways in which jazz is implicated in an oppositional African American identity, but for the time being turn to the literature of Eastern Europe to show how jazz is represented, in terms of the Dionysian aspects of the carnival, as the enemy of totalitarian regimes.

Simon Dentith, in his discussion of Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*, lists Milan Kundera's *The Joke* (1992) among his examples of 'dispersed activities and cultural forms which can [...] be seen to have real historical connections' (1995:70) if read through the analytical lens of the 'carnival' or 'carnivalesque'. While he warns of the dangers of 'losing Bakhtin's careful historical specificity' (1995:70) in the endless extrapolations of 'carnival' in analyses, Dentith does suggest that, in *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin offers a conceptual mobilization of 'the rumbustious life of the carnival against the official but murderous pieties of Church and State in Renaissance Europe [as, among other things] a rejoinder to cultural life under Stalinism' (1995:71). Stalinism, according to Dentith, mobilized a particular anodyne version of the 'folk' (1995:71). It, like Nazism, recruited the 'folk' into a nostalgic sentimentality, turning an association with the earth and seasonal cycles into a supposedly dependable collective wisdom and profound morality. This version of the 'folk' ignores, for its very existence, the grotesque, the disruptive, the masked, the rapacious, the exuberant, the bacchanalian and the subversive faces of 'folk' culture. While Bakhtin can be accused of

romanticism in his denial of the collusion of dominant and 'folk' cultures and of a failure to acknowledge the neutralization of resistance that occurs in the space of the officially-sanctioned carnival, he nevertheless provides a basis for re-membering the 'folk' tradition which is endlessly dismembered in fascist recuperations of popular culture. He initiates a conceptual schema which counters Adorno's denigration of the 'popular' (and of jazz in particular) and allows for an analysis of the representations of subversive inversions, of masking, of parody, of humour and of the grotesque in literary representations of popular culture.

Milan Kundera's *The Joke*, while its climactic moment is a journey of discovery in the course of an improvised musical performance, concerns jazz only marginally. For this reason it may seem a rather oblique departure point for a discussion of the representations of jazz as carnivalesque opposition to the destructive pieties of fascism. The joke itself, scribbled on a postcard by the protagonist, Ludvik, is: 'Optimism is the opium of the people! A healthy atmosphere stinks of stupidity! Long live Trotsky!' (1992:34). The postcard, written in a moment of disenchantment with Marketa, reaches her while she is on a Communist Party training course. Marketa reports the joke to the authorities and, in doing so, initiates a sequence of events that devastates Ludvik's life. Fascism, it seems, cannot abide parody. The slippery nature of signification, the ironic reversal of officially-sanctioned 'truths', is represented as intolerable play, as a threat to the ideological monolith which assures the powerful of their sanctity. *The Joke*, though, chooses two related targets: the fascist pomp of the Party and the falsely constituted folk culture.

In the novel, Jaroslav is a custodian of folklore and the organizer of the Ride of the Kings, a traditional harvest festival. In the course of acknowledging the abiding lie at the heart of the creation and perpetuation of the ceremony, Jaroslav recalls the gradual decline of officially-induced nostalgia.

Ludvik was the first crack to appear in my life. But now I'm used to it. My life is a less than sturdy house. I was in Prague not long ago and I went into one of those little theatres, the kind that started springing up in the early sixties and quickly became the

rage owing to the student humour of the young players. The show wasn't very interesting, but the songs were clever and the jazz quite good. All of a sudden the musicians donned feathered hats like the ones we wear with our folk costumes, and did a takeoff of a cimbalom ensemble. They screeched and wailed, mimicking our dance steps and the way we throw our arms up in the air. [...] It went on for no more than a few minutes, but it had the audience rolling in the aisles. I couldn't believe my eyes. Five years ago no one would have dared to make clowns of us like that.
(1992:129)

It is, as with Ludvik's joke, parody that reveals the absurdity of officially-sanctioned memory, that reveals the constructed (and imposed) nature of fascist ideology. Fascism has to make and take itself seriously; it has to remain unequivocal about its version of the 'real'. A carnivalesque rendition of its absurdity undermines not only the fixity of its content, but the certainty with which it advances that content as reality. Anathema to hedonism, play, provisionality, contingency and improvisation, fascism is dependent on harmonizing grand narratives in which the subject, memory, history and ethics are seen as variations on the same set of ideological themes. In its doctrines of necessary self-sacrifice, the need for discipline, the intrinsic value of structure and the official body of belief, fascism is Brueghel's Lent, the object of Carnival's Quarrel (Attali 1985:21-2).

In his analysis, which is a discursive improvisation on the imagery of Brueghel's *Carnival's Quarrel with Lent*, Jacques Attali asserts that theorists of totalitarianism

have all explained, indistinctly, that it is necessary to ban subversive noise because it betokens demands for cultural autonomy, support of differences, or marginality: a concern for maintaining tonalism, the primacy of melody, a distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal – these characteristics are common to all regimes of that nature. (1985:7)

It is this desire for control, for the maintenance of order and discipline, which is often represented as arrayed against jazz in literature. Jazz is regularly the noise which has to be

silenced if the harmony of officialdom is to be propagated. Whether jazz has defining characteristics which ally it to the carnival, whether in its improvisational aspect and its celebration of code-breaking it stands as the inevitable opponent of fascism's certainties, or whether this is only a particularly widespread historicist mis-reading of jazz, it is frequently represented on the side of the festival: the joke, hedonism, parody, doubling, the masked, the unstable, the abnormal, the grotesque.

Towards the conclusion of *The Joke*, Helena, a reporter covering the Ride of the Kings (though as a cover for a sexual assignation with Ludvick), describes the Czech youth:

They impress me. I admire them exactly because they're different. They love their bodies. We neglected ours. They love to travel. We stayed put. They love adventure. We lived our lives at meetings. They love jazz. We insipidly imitated folk music. They're devoted to themselves. We wanted to save the world. With our messianism we nearly destroyed it. Maybe they with their selfishness will save it. (1992:275)

Each contrast locates the generations on opposite sides: Lent and Carnival. And it is the advent of the carnivalesque that heralds change. Jazz is both a musical accompaniment to the change and emblematic of a new ontology with profound political implications.

Josef Škvorecký's novella, *The Bass Saxophone* (originally published in 1967, but translated into English in 1978), is a remarkable evocation of the carnivalesque as the disruptive contrary of fascist ideology. The novella comprises recollections of the narrator's life in jazz, which culminates in an account of his being compelled by circumstance to play the bass saxophone in Lothar Kinze's ensemble for an audience comprising local Nazis and sympathizers. Having witnessed the arrival of *Lothar Kinze mit seinem Unterhaltungsorchester* in his Nazi-occupied hometown, Kostelec, the young narrator, seduced by the 'fossil instrument' (1980:81) and convinced by an adamant Kinze, finds himself navigating a tenuous course between Nazi officialdom (embodied in the figure of the local *Regierungskommissar*, Horst Hermann Kühl) and his justified fear of being thought a collaborator by the Czech underground. In the course of recounting the performance, the

narrator recollects a series of prior events that form the basis of his fears. It is with one of these recollections that I start an analysis of the novella.

The narrator recounts how, in the habit of playing jazz records from the projectionist's booth of the local cinema prior to performances, he had carefully marked those which included vocals, knowing that these would be in violation of Nazi stipulations concerning 'Negroid' music. In error, prior to a performance of a Nazi propaganda film, *Quax, der Bruchpilot*, he plays a recording of Ella Fitzgerald singing with the Chick Webb Orchestra. While the audience sits like the occupants of Plato's cave, ready to be subjected to the imagery on which their false consciousness depends, to the fascist delusions of their masters, from the projectionist's booth emerge 'the first beats of Webb's drum in the foxtrot Congo' (1980:84). The jazz-evangelist narrator is startled that no one appears moved by 'the annunciation, the sending down of beauty on the heads of the movie house' (1980:84-5). When the voice of Ella Fitzgerald begins – 'I've got a guy, and he's tough, He's just a gem in the rough, But when I polish him up, I swear...' (1980:85) – one person is indeed moved. 'Horst Hermann Kühl stopped talking, pricked up his ears, took notice, and then cut loose with a roar' (1980:85). The record is duly confiscated never to be retrieved even when a 'number of armed musicians' (1980:85) ransack Kühl's residence after the war.

This theft of the 'black Ella' (1980:85) stands for the silencing on which fascism depends. Ella Fitzgerald comes to stand for the incursion of noise into the order of Nazism; the voice of the silenced dissonant 'other' of a master-race ideology. *Quax, der Bruchpilot*, we can assume, is comprised of the sanctioned illusions intended to propagate the contraries of the values associated with jazz: an embodied spontaneity and a celebration of provisionality. To return to Attali:

Noise is a weapon and music, primordially, is the formation, domestication, and ritualization of that weapon as a simulacrum of ritual murder. (1985:24)

If jazz is held to exist outside of the province of the musical, to be subversive noise as yet undomesticated, then its exclusion (like its incorporation into the practice of 'music') is a

ritual murder on which the dominant order depends. The confiscation of the record (and the persecution of the narrator for playing it) is more than pedantry; it is on these micro-modalities of power that fascism depends. To use the language of Freud, the meaning of the voice of Ella Fitzgerald stands as the repressed on which the ideology of Nazism depends. It is the 'return of the repressed', as the voice of the vocalist emerges from behind and above the audience, that evokes Kühl's passionate denunciation.

It is not only from without, from the 'dark' world of Chicago which the bass saxophone evokes for the narrator, that the 'other' of carnival sings against the forces of totalitarianism. Lothar Kinze and his *Unterhaltungssorchester* are described by the narrator as a 'Breughellesque detail from the Inferno' (1980:96).

[Kinze's] scalp was crumpled like the shell of a boiled egg that had burst; one eye sat lower down on his cheek, a bluish eye, surrounded by fair whiskers. (1980:75–6)

A haggard little fat man with a flushed bald head and bags under his eyes was standing in the doorway [...] a woman's head appeared behind the man's bald pate, grey, curly-haired, two blue eyes and a big bulbous nose – a clown's face, a living caricature of a woman's face on a bloated woman's body [...] behind her came a more unbelievable figure, almost a midget – no, not almost, he was a midget, he came up to my waist, smaller than the bass saxophone he was holding upright [...] he looked like Caesar: long, thin, tightly closed lips, a Roman nose [...] And like a procession of spectres, other apparitions entered the room. A blond, very beautiful girl [...] her hair falling to her shoulders like broken swan's wings [...] behind the girl came a hunchback with black glasses on his nose, and with him a one-eyed giant who led him by the hand. (1992:88–90)

If we compare this representation to Bakhtin's description of the grotesque bodies in Rabelais, the similarity is immediately apparent.

Rabelais presents a number of typical grotesque forms of exaggerated body parts that

completely hide the normal members of the body. This is actually a picture of dismemberment, of separate areas of the body enlarged to gigantic dimensions. First of all, we see men with monstrous bellies (a typical grotesque hyperbola). [...] Next Rabelais depicts hunchbacks with humps of huge proportions, or monstrous noses, abnormally long legs, gigantic ears. There are men with disproportionate phalli (wound six times round their waists) and others with abnormally large testes. We have a picture of a giant grotesque body and at the same time an array of carnival figures. (Bahktin in Dentith 1995:235.)

Attali's mapping of the noise of carnival in Brueghel's painting shows the equivalence of the carnivalesque grotesque body and dissonance. He considers Brueghel to be enacting 'an archeology of resonances but also of marginalities: for every character in the painting, with the exception of the bourgeois and penitents, is marked by physical deformity, woes of time' (1985:22). For Attali, a 'cartography of deformities [is] a cartography of noises' (1985:22). There is an ideological link between the 'spatial pathology' (1985:22) of the grotesque body and dissonance in that both transgress the limits of the controlled, the disciplined and the completed. The violation of harmony in acoustics and spatiality stands as an assertion of the 'familiar and colloquial' (Bahktin in Dentith 1985:246) over the ideals which centre ideologies of perfectibility.

Obviously the particular ideology against which the bodies of Lothar Kinze and his *Unterhaltungssorchester* are arrayed is National Socialism. The ensemble represents the detritus of the Reich, granted audience by Nazi officials because their initial repertoire comprises a selection of sentimental folk songs. As the performance proceeds, the ensemble dispels the spectre of harmony and begins to perform in accord with the carnivalesque spirit they embody.

[W]e surrounded her voice with that medley – this time mezzoforte – with the immobile creaking pulse of derision, with a shameless brassiness; and in the middle of it all, one half of her voice, the alto half, was in tune with the other half, flageolets of her scarred vocal cords, joined our distonal catcalling – like rolling voices in a

synagogue, each complaining for itself yet, in a choir of many voices, complaining about a common fate, incapable of common song, only of separate, merging, disharmonically complementary off-key chants. (1980:117)

Just as the assembled bodies on stage are a spatial resistance to the bodies of Nazi propaganda, so the music performs the silenced noises of the Reich: the distonality of the real and the voices of massacred Jews. The bodies and 'distonal catcalling' of *Lothar Kinze mit seinem Unterhaltungsorchester*, those constitutive exclusions of National Socialism, announce the fabrications of fascism, show the illusions in Plato's cave to be what they are.

[B]efore me, on the waves of distonality, the world of Horst Hermann Kühl, his discipline, and his fertile German women bloated by the loud sentimentality of garden restaurants in Berlin Pankow, melted in that weepy abandonment like the Führer's bust made of chocolate. [...] Lothar Kinze, a water goblin in purple satin, leaned with immense sadistic energy into his muddy chords. (1980:117–8)

A carnival figure, Lothar Kinze is the impish destroyer of the classical body and the Doric architecture of sound. Spatial and harmonic 'disorder' tear aside the forces of Lent and the carnival arises, though only temporarily, as a supreme reminder of the presence of the excluded.

At the novella's conclusion, the bass saxophone player, having arisen from a drunken stupor, arrives on stage and claims his instrument from the narrator. The giant, who 'showed no sign of deformation, no wound, no red-flame of once-burned flesh like the bald head of Lothar Kinze, and certainly no artificial limb or hump or hypertrophic nose, no blind eyes' (1980:121), is monstrous in sound alone. The bass saxophone, that 'nightmare of an instrument maker, a curious jest of some man long since dead' (1980:82), is described as producing a primordial 'nerve-shattering bellow, the voice of a melancholy gorilla' (1980:88). It is this fundamental acoustic wrenching that leads the narrator to an array of images of the primeval, of a sound which precedes all attempts at controlling noise.

[T]he man was struggling with the bass saxophone; he was not playing, he was overpowering it; it sounded like a wild fight of two cruel, dangerous and powerful animals roaring at each other; his ditch-diggers hands (by their size not their callouses) were squeezing the blinded body that was like the neck of a brontosaurus, and huge sobs poured out of the corpus, roars thousands of millions of years old. (1980:121)

A primal and elemental violence surges into the present. The veil of illusion which is Kühl's 'Bavarian dream' (1980:123) is rent apart by the sound of the instrument. In announcing a fundamental and irrepressible noise, a dissonance whose abiding presence all systems have sought to curtail, the obsessive order of Nazism is revealed as just another attempt to deny the persistence of a crescendo of chaos. The Reich is shown, in its fabrication of illusion, as just another inept attempt to contain forces beyond its control. This acoustically grotesque incursion into the halls of discipline and control is a momentary victory for the forces of the carnivalesque. And it is with the clarion call of the bass saxophone ringing in his ears that the narrator wanders off into the darkness at the novella's conclusion.

The Bass Saxophone is, perhaps, Škvorecký's most accomplished depiction of the war between carnivalesque jazz and totalitarianism. This abiding concern in his *oeuvre* is encapsulated in his assertion: 'jazz was a sharp thorn in the side of the power-hungry men, from Hitler to Brezhnev, who successfully ruled in my native land' (Škvorecký 1989:83). For Škvorecký, jazz is not intrinsically a music of populist resistance (contrary to the status it is accorded in that strain of jazz scholarship initiated by LeRoi Jones, 1963). Rather, he sees jazz as expressing an '*elan vital*' (1989:83), a creative energy and exuberance which subverts fascism through its affirmation of spontaneity and expressivity in the face of the grand teleologies of totalitarian politics. Its playfulness (particularly its use of irony and parody), and the provisional nature of improvised performance, regularly undermine the 'certain certainties' (to echo T. S. Eliot's 'Preludes') on which the politics of domination and regularity depend. This '*elan vital*' takes the form of fun, ingenuity and petty transgression in both *The Swell Season* (1994) and *The Cowards* (1994). I shall examine neither at length here. The introductory comment to *The Cowards* is, though, a useful departure for a discussion of Škvorecký's seminally important 'Eine Kleine Jazzmusik' (in Breton 1990:131–147).

The Cowards begins with Milton 'Mezz' Mezzrow's characterization of the 'revolution simmering in Chicago':

These rebels in plus-fours, huddled on a bandstand instead of a soapbox, passed out riffs instead of handbills, but the effect was the same. Their jazz was collectively improvised nosethumbing at all pillars of all communities, one big syncopated Bronx cheer for the righteous squares everywhere. Jazz was the only language they could find to preach their fire-eating message. (1994:9)

The carnivalesque nature of the revolution (the 'nosethumbing' at all respectability, the 'Bronx cheer' and the 'fire-eating message') is the archive of much of Škvorecký's jazz fiction. In his assessment of Škvorecký's writing, Szwed states, 'True radicalism, someone once said, lies not in telling someone his politics are wrong, but in telling him his shoes are tied wrong' (Szwed 1980:588). In the world of Škvorecký's young jazz musicians, the real achievement is to tie together the shoelaces of Nazi and Communist officials: fascist pomp is deflated in pranks, and narrow escapes are prized above all else as indications of demonstrated irreverence. Both the prank and improvised musical performance are assertions of individual ingenuity, and both, in Škvorecký's fiction, as is suggested by his use of Mezzrow's comment on the Chicago swingkids, perform the important function of creating a collective rebellion against the forces of homogeneity. Jazz is regularly reflected as a site of both individuality and camaraderie: a community based on the exaltation of iconoclasm. As with much jazz mythopoesis, the alignment of jazz with the forces of liberation and individual actualization may well stand in the space of the wish rather than being a verifiable reality. Nevertheless, the literary use of jazz as a site in which the ruses of pleasure contend with ideologies of discipline is common.

This is nowhere more apparent than in Škvorecký's 'Eine Kleine Jazzmusik'. The story includes a transcribed list of (actual) regulations for dance bands issued by *Herr Reichsmusikführer* (and published in the journal *Reichszeit-Schrift für Volkstanzmusik*). These regulations were, remarkably, though with varying degrees of success, enforced by local Nazi officials. Among them are the following reflections of Nazi paranoia and racism.

[I]n the repertoire of this so-called jazz type, preference is to be given to compositions in a major key and to lyrics expressing joy in life (*Kraft durch Freude*) rather than Jewishly gloomy lyrics....

[P]reference is to be given to brisk compositions as opposed to slow ones (so-called blues); however, the pace must not exceed a certain degree of allegro commensurate with the Aryan sense of discipline and moderation. On no account will negroid excesses in tempo (so-called hot jazz) be permitted....

[S]o-called jazz compositions may contain at most 10% syncopation; the remainder must form a regular legato movement devoid of hysterical rhythmic reverses characteristic of the music of the barbarian races and conducive to dark instincts alien to the German people (so-called *riffs*).

[P]rovocative rising to one's feet during solo performances is forbidden.

(1990:137–8).

'Eine Kleine Jazzmusik' depicts the ingenuous measures of Paddy's Dixielanders, a school jazz band in the town referred to as 'K.', to have a concert approved in which they will violate each of the regulations. These include advertising the concert as a 'Program of Joyful Melodies from All Over the World' (1990:139) and renaming jazz standards so that they appear to be consistent with Aryan iconography: 'Matters of the Heart' (in fact, 'Heartbreak Blues'), 'In the Swimming Pool' (in fact, 'Riverside Blues') and 'Our Bull Took Fright' (in fact, 'Tiger Rag'). The band's singer, Suzy Braun, then contrives the absence of the collaborator headmaster, Czermack – who gives the 'Aryan raised arm salute' when entering the classrooms (1990:134) – by forging a letter inviting him to Prague to receive the Shield of Honor of the St. Wenceslaus Eagle, an event in the hope of which he awakes each day of his life. *Herr Regierungskommissar Kühl*, the local Nazi official in K., is left alone in the Municipal Theatre scowling through the performance, 'vainly trying to keep count of the percentage of syncopes' (1990:141).

The temporary victory of the evening, apart from the successful violation of the regulations, is the impact of the music on the audience as a whole, and on a contingent of the local *Wermacht* in particular.

There rose a storm of barbarous rapture, especially in the circle where the sexually starved members of the superior race, led astray by the spirit of the negroid music and the charm of the racially inferior singer, forgot their sense of moderation and called for an encore by stamping feet and lusty Teutonic shouts. (1990:143)

Parodying the rhetoric of the *Reichsmusikführer*, the narrator's account is of an 'enraptured' *Infanterieregiment* (1990:142) transported beyond the ideological control of their masters by 'that provocative, soaring storm of music [in which] words lost their meaning and ceased to matter' (1990:145). Since '[e]very code of music is rooted in the ideologies [...] of its age, and at the same time produces them' (Attali 1985:19), the Dixielander's transgression of the Nazi code of practice of 'so-called' jazz is a significant subversion. What increases its significance is the rapturous (though short-lived) conversion of the defenders of Nazism. The detachment of the *Wermacht* is moved, by the music, into the space of the carnivalesque, into a hedonistic celebration of the absence of routine authority and restraint. In that space, the divisions of the world on which Nazism relies cease to matter; they lose their hold on reality and, in that loss, reveal the illusory nature of the contrived order of fascism.

The victory of Dionysus in 'Eine Kleine Jazzmusik' is fleeting. The violation of the 'Aryan honor of the town of K.' (1990:146) is revenged through the execution of Paddy Nakonec (whose 'half-Aryan' identity makes him the scapegoat) and the suspension from studies of most of the members of the band. The import of the rebellious concert, the incursion of the carnival into the world of the Reich, is understood in all of its ideological implications and the iron fist of control descends. The band is decimated and order is victorious. Nevertheless, the abiding impression with which the story leaves the reader is of a victory. The point at which the Municipal Hall becomes the arena of a bacchanalian festival exposes the repressed aspects of the self which fascism seeks to deny; a substratum of excess arises and its existence is proved, irrespective of subsequent attempts to dispel its presence and power.

At the outset of this chapter, I suggested, following De Certeau, that stories are demarcations: they establish existential and anthropological maps and locate cultural practices within them. Jazz is regularly placed on the side of the carnival. It is represented as a means of subverting the political certainties on which civilizations's order relies. In this it is the 'other' of those doctrines that would seek to elucidate being through curtailing it to specific principles or to a body of 'truth'. Like the carnival, jazz is represented as a theatre of inversions, subversions, and violations of hegemonic structures that would keep things put. As with Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais, many of these representations can be accused of a political naivete: that an anodyne version of the 'folk' created in fascist discourses is replaced with a romantic assessment of the capacity of the carnivalesque to effect a difference which matters. Nevertheless, literary jazz is often about the wish that the marginalized noises of systems of control might preserve a necessary degree of disorder while revealing the constructed nature of the systems themselves.

To exhibit this wish performed, rather than explicated, a poem by Kelwyn Sole, published in South Africa (*Staffrider* 1988:271–3) at the height of the apartheid era, is reproduced here in full. It is a text, an exegesis of which would be a curtailment: it would situate its carnivalesque moments once more in the dominant order of the symbolic, the Apollonian. It is here, then, as a performance, a staging of the spaces and practices mapped in this chapter. The poem 'sounds off' against the Nazi regulations, which are the broken spine of Škvorecký's 'Eine Kleine Jazzmusik', and speaks to both the context of those regulations and the context in which it was written.

Jazz

(Based on an instruction to German dance bands, 1940)

1

Pieces in so-called foxtrot rhythm
(so-called swing) are not to exceed
20% of the repertoires
of light orchestras and dance bands:

2

in this so-called
jazz type repertoire,
PREFERENCE is to be
 given
to composition in a major key
and to lyrics expressing
 joy
in life
rather than Jewishly lyrics
 gloomy

3

as/to tempo
?
preference is also to be given to brisk
compositions
over
slow
ones (so-called BLUES)

however the pace	(you break my heart)
must not exceed	(when you're away)
a certain degree	(my man has gone)
of allegro	(won't come back till day)

commensurate

with the Aryan sense of
discipline/& modera-
 tion

(wa wa)

On no account will NEGROID excesses in tempo
so-called hot jazz in solo performance so-called breaks be

allowed.

4

so-called jazz compositions

'may'

contain

at most 10%

yn

co

pa

ti

o

n

the remainder must consist of

a n a t u r a l l e g a t o m o v e m e n t a

devoid of the hysterical rhythmic eversals

characteristic

of the music of barbarian races

and cond-u.

cive

to DARK instincts

ooo

alien

aaa

to the GERMAN PEOPLE

5

strictly prohibited (don't forget, now, baby)

is the use of instruments

alien to the German spirit

i.e. so-called saxophones of all keys

as well as mutes

which turn the noble sound of WIND (?)

and brass instruments

into a Jewish-Freemasonic yowl

(you got that, cat)

so-called wa wa and hat.

6

also prohibited are

so-called drum/

breaks

longer than//

half^a beat/^m four
quarter beat
e/x/c/e/p/t/i/n/s//t/y//i/z/e//d
mili (beedobee) tary MAR!/che/S
//////////!

7

The Double-
Bass must be played solely
(yeh)
with the so-called
bow
in so-called jazz and other syncopations

8

plucking of the strings
is prohibited
since it is damaging
to the instrument
and detrimental to
Aryan musicality

9

musicians are
likewise
forbidden to make vocal
improvisations (so-called scat)

10

skoo-bee-doo!

To reiterate, by way of conclusion: representations of jazz (like stories generally) organize the cultural and existential spaces they traverse. They also situate the music (and its performers and fans) in spaces which are relationally defined. Literary jazz is endlessly configured against the spaces it is held intrinsically to oppose (Christian *ressentiment*, Apollonian rationalism, fascist ideology, bourgeois self-righteousness, cold intellectualism). To represent jazz is to intervene in some way in this tradition of opposition: to enter the economy of the binaries Apollo – Dionysus, Lent – Carnival, harmony – noise, discipline – desire and

civilization – primitivism. No sign is free of the traces of its previous semantic entanglements: all narrative interventions leave marks that become either indications of safe, well-trodden routes or are markers left by the lost (and are, therefore, in themselves guides of a sort). The intertextual nexus, comprising the second terms in the binaries defined against the first, is a basic organizational principle of many representations of jazz. The ensuing chapters develop this notion through an exploration of versions of embodiment in jazz, the theology of opposition in religious tropes and sustained attention to journeys of personal and cultural identity in representing the music and its performance. All of these discussions are informed by the broader mapping exercise of this chapter.

Chapter 2

Jazz Bodies: somatic, instrumental and in process

For something's fallen in my body and I can't hear the music as I play it. The notes more often now. She hitting each note with her body before it is even out so I know what I do through her. God this is what I wanted to play for, if no one else I always guessed there would be this, this mirror somewhere, she closer to me now and her eyes over mine tough and young and come from god knows where. [...] Half dead, can't take more, hardly hit the squawks but when I do my body flicks at them as if I'm the dancer till the music is out there. *Roar*. [...] She still covers my eyes with hers and sees it slow and allows the slowness for me her breasts black under the wet light shirt, sound and pain in my heart sure as death. All my body moves to my throat and I speed again and she speeds tired again, a river of sweat to her waist her head and hair back bending back to me, all the desire in me is cramp and hard, cocaine on my cock, eternal, for my heart is at my throat hitting pure slow notes into the shimmy dance of victory, hair toss victory, a local strut, eyes meeting sweat down her chin arms in final exercise pain, take on the last squawk and let it cough and climb to spear her all those watching like a javelin through the brain and down into the stomach, feel the blood that is real move up bringing flesh energy in its suitcase, it comes up flooding past my heart in a mad parade, it is coming through my teeth, it is into the cornet....

Michael Ondaatje *Coming Through Slaughter* (1984:130–1)

Embodiment: five riffs on a theme.

I.

The sonic and the visceral

Bolden 'went crazy because he really blew his brains out through the trumpet' (Jelly Roll Morton, in Gioia 1988:57) – improvisational brilliance/psychological instability. To disrupt codes of musical practice is to confront dissonance. It is to situate oneself at the boundary between harmony (the discipline of scales) and noise (the cacophony of the un-codified). Such a position, bordering on chaos, unsettles the syntax of being: the innovator is at risk as the force of the limit-experience contravenes the *forms* of affect and cognition. Where, though, is the body in this? 'All my body moves to my throat.' Embroiled in the crisis of the new, Bolden (in Ondaatjie's rendition) experiences the insurgence of desire across the division between the mind and the body. It is as if, at the edge of those conventional structures comprised of multiple differentiations (language, music, any system of signs), differences – including that between mind and body – become tentative, provisional. Sounds (squawks, roars) spill over the border between music and noise just as the flow of blood carries the 'flesh energy' of the body into the instrument, and, implicitly, into the music itself. Extremities, the attenuation of music to its breaking point (noise) and the tearing of the viscera in a wrenching expressivity, reveal the fluidity of boundaries and the tenuous nature of the seeming stabilities within them. That Bolden 'blew his brains out through the trumpet' is at once metaphor (improvising suicide) and, amid collapsing categories, strangely literal. The crescendo of self-actualization which Ondaatjie depicts is the victorious experience ('hair toss victory') of undifferentiated being (the mind *is* the body *is* his music), but is, simultaneously, the rupture of those fragile divisions on which survival relies.

II.

An aesthetics of imperfection

'Jazz improvisation, by its very nature, tends towards apparent formlessness, towards a breakdown in structural coherence, towards excess. [...] Under the pressure of spontaneous creation the jazz artist has little opportunity to impose on his music the architectonic sense of order and balance that distinguishes the more leisurely constructed arts' (Gioia 1988:92). Formalist analyses of jazz compositions reify the work: they make a fetish of the opus by separating it from the conditions of its emergence; by emphasizing the product rather the located process through which it comes into being. According to Gioia, we need an 'aesthetics of imperfection' (1988:55), which takes account of the complexities of simultaneous composition and performance, if we are to do any justice to what jazz *is*. Such an aesthetics would look at, among other aspects, the virtuosity of a performer (under specific musical circumstances) in comparison to the virtuosity of others in similar circumstances. It would concern itself with what a musician, at a specific time and place, can *do*. An 'aesthetics of imperfection' stands, as a consequence of its resistance to reification and its swing 'from noun to verb' (Mackey 1995:265), in a different relation to the body of the performer. We could barely consider Bolden's performance ('She hitting each note with her body before it is even out so I know what to do through her') outside of the embodied process of its becoming.

III.

Performance and eroticism

Bolden's performance, in and around the voice and body of the vocalist, is described in terms of erotic reciprocity and as violent penetration ('to spear her all those watching like a javelin') on a veritable tide of body fluids. The climactic tearing of his body is the culmination of a complete (embodied) immersion in the vocalist: a self-actualization through

recognition (being mirrored back), a discovery of the self by losing it in the body of another. This is the only occasion in a narrative marked by Bolden's search for an erotic equivalence of his ideal of jazz which is uncoloured by an overriding sense of alienation. For once his entire being is implicated in performance and the potential of the music, long-sensed but hitherto elusive, is realized. The extremity of *doing* jazz finds correlates adequate to its intensity only in sexuality (the aneurysm-inducing orgasm). The desire required to transgress the borders of the musically-possible, and the effects of such transgression, is expressed most appositely through the body's tangible and manifest desire.

IV.

The body, history and tradition

Buddy Bolden famously went mad playing in a parade in Liberty-Iberville in 1907. He was institutionalized, in a state of mental and physical collapse, until his death twenty-three years later. Despite rumours of a surviving, grail-like phonograph cylinder, it is relatively certain that Bolden never recorded (a detail Ondaatje uses in his novel with significant resonance). He left no disembodied trace of himself, making his music a clean slate for anecdotes, projections, myths. In accounts of his life (rumours, memories, fictions) Bolden becomes the first victim of improvisational extremity; the first devotee to be ravaged by the rough strife of jazz. His is the first body (to be followed by Parker's bloated body in Baroness de Koenigswarter's apartment on Fifth Avenue, Ike Quebec's murdered body found in the Nevada desert, Lee Morgan dead on stage having been shot by a jealous lover, Chet Baker, newly recovered from heroin addiction, crashing onto an Amsterdam sidewalk...) destroyed by the contingencies of a life (like an improvisation) made up as one goes along. Bolden's final performance (music, sex, blood, dementia) comes to stand for something intrinsic to jazz, is almost its initiating myth: the bird-man who flies too high; the Romantic artist poised to tear himself apart for his art.

The instrumental body

As Bolden bleeds into the narrow compass of the cornet's mouthpiece, the line between the body of the performer and the instrument is breached. It stops, in some sense, being an 'instrument' as the radically embodied Bolden flows into it. The cornet becomes an extension of the body, an incorporated means of expressing desire with suitable force and in appropriate quantities. Handing down the cornet to tradition, it comes to stand for the bodies that have passed through it. It embodies the identities of others, and becomes the history of these identities to which every player who picks up the cornet speaks. It becomes a body of knowledge and a composite expression of all potentials actualized through it.

This discussion of the use of bodies in representations of jazz comprises two meanders and a strut. The first meander is a reading of Kristeva's 'geometry' of concepts in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) and a discussion of Barthes's application of this scheme in his essay, 'The Grain of the Voice' (1982). The second is a consideration of the received notions about live performance in jazz and their implications for literary representations. Much of this second discussion is indebted to Goehr's argument in 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance' (1995–6:1–22). The strut is a free-wheeling use of these theories to understand something of the representational practice which situates jazz in the bodies of performers and the audience or which resorts to bodies to signify on the music and its implications. I conclude by referring to some of the implications for literary analysis of John Corbett's meditative linking of 'three bodies' in improvised performance: 'knowledge, performer, instrument' (1995:236). Tropological translations back and forth across the boundary between music and corporeality abound in literary configurations of jazz. A careful reading of such translations may have implications for both the analysis of literary jazz and, more generally, for understanding jazz bodies as objects of discourse.

Amid the surge of theorizing bodies, it seems incumbent on a writer to espouse a position.

What is meant by *the body* cannot be taken for granted. In the ensuing analyses, the body is conceived in terms of the 'existential integration' of Merleau-Ponty. Contrary to the Cartesian tradition, Merleau-Ponty argues for the inseparability of the 'psychic' and the 'somatic'. They are intricately combined and embedded in (and create) a complex network of cultural meanings. The body is, thus, neither a *res extensa*, nor merely a product of individual psychology, rather it is indivisibly both and a social text. On the question of *indivisibility* at moments of crisis, Merleau-Ponty argues:

Between the psychic and the physiological there may take place exchanges which almost always stand in the way of defining a mental disturbance as psychic *or* somatic. The disturbance described as somatic produces, on the theme of the organic accident, tentative psychic commentaries, and the 'psychic' trouble confines itself to elaborating the human significance of the bodily event. (1962:88)

It is these 'exchanges' which suggest an endlessly fluid boundary between mind and the body (in Cartesian terms). Furthermore, the constant elaborations of meaning at this confluence make a body 'as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system' (1962:203). The 'system' it forms suggests that the body performs a 'worlding' function.

The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world: at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world. (1962:146)

It is this array of worlds which justifies, in my analysis, stepping from the somatic to the psychological, from the performative to the cultural, without decentring the body as a primary (initiating) site. It is also the notion of 'existential integration' which allows for the

theorization of desire and its relation to discipline, since that analysis, too, conflates the 'psychic' and 'somatic' in the space of the codes of language and, potentially, in the practice of music.

Kristeva's representation of the signifying process, her account of the co-extensive *semiotic* and *symbolic*, provides a useful model of an anti-dialectic that nevertheless configures a binary account of the journey towards meaning; one which implicates both signification and its relation to embodied drives. Her theory centres desire in the creation of meaning by proposing that its irruption into signifying systems is the origin of the 'revolutions' in language, that the linguistic code is revitalized by disruptions instigated by the immanence of the body. The implications of this for the representation of code-breaking jazz improvisation emerge later in this analysis. Conceiving of the presence of the body in language, though, provides at once a useful analogy and an equivalence for considering the rhetorical structure of these representations.

For Kristeva the *chora* is a modality in the act of signifying. A primary site, the *chora* is 'a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated' (1984:25). The *chora* is *patterned* because the energies of which it is constituted are arranged, in the course of identity formation, around the restraints placed on the body (by family and social structures). It emerges, not as a cacophony of unrestrained and unmitigated desires, but channelled by the restraints of socialization. The *chora* is also *patterning* in that its irruptions are generated in accordance with its organization; they take their form and content from its composition and arrangement. The *chora*, while not an arbitrary assemblage of chaotic drives, is also not a static pattern. Shifting desires, the flowing force of the drives, unsettles the structure of the *chora*, causing a constant (almost kaleidoscopic) rearrangement. It is this multivalent nature of the *chora* (generative, reactive, mobile, structured, structuring) that makes it impossible to characterize it as succinct. To do so is both to deny its flux and to entrench a concept that is provisional, to reify a postulate known only by its manifestations. The semiotic emerges from (and constitutes) the *chora* and disfigures the expected configurations of discourse. It ruptures the syntax of being by contorting the symbolic (signification) into unanticipated and

unpredictable shapes. Desire floods, overwhelms and changes indelibly the 'surface' of language: force fragments, then reconstitutes, form. This, for Kristeva, is the origin and function of poetic language.

To characterize poetic language in terms of the primacy of the semiotic is, however, a misreading of Kristeva. 'The subject is always *both* semiotic *and* symbolic'¹ (Kristeva 1984:24) and any enunciation (inevitably from a subject position) is liminal, existing in motion at some point along the border of the two. The liminality in poetic language is more pronounced since it is here that the incursion of the semiotic is most immediate, is as yet unregulated by reiteration in the symbolic. It is in poetic language, therefore, that the process of subject formation (in the economy of exchange between the symbolic and semiotic) is most apparent. It is also here that the subject, experiencing the rupture of the familiar, is at risk. Kristeva expresses this by describing the (poetic) subject as 'in process/on trial' (Kristeva 1984:58). The self, in this formulation, is a journey at the interstices of language and desire (an always-becoming subject) and it is in poetic language that this journey is most recognizable.

It is significant that, in the work of Kristeva, such *journeys of being* are not teleological. They are closer to the tactic of 'walking' in De Certeau where the subject intervenes in space by positing a *here-there*, but never comes to terms (especially literally) with the beginning and end (or the extent) of the city. The master narratives of ontology are always beyond the scope of the walking subject who *becomes* only at the micro-modalities of intervention. The analogy to De Certeau's 'walking' is not absolute: the *thetic* moment in Kristeva (the 'journey' from the semiotic to the symbolic) is impossible to conceive as a spatial traverse. This is because the semiotic and the symbolic are always-already *within* one another: the symbolic is comprised of the traces of previous irruptions of the semiotic and the semiotic is at once structured by symbolic categorisation and can only be seen in its

¹ The 'both-and' style of Kristeva's thought is informatively similar to Merleau-Ponty's. For an analysis of this trend in his *Phenomenology of Perception* see Macann, Christopher. 1993. *Four Phenomenological Philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty*. London: Routledge: 161-170.

effect on signification. The 'both-and' structure of Kristeva's process of being disrupts the spatiality implied by the metaphor of the journey. This disruption, the collapse of each point in the scheme into its seeming opposite, is also an act of integration, a move contradicting Cartesian dualism (mind/body) while asserting the primacy of *process* over the transcendental notion of the Freudian ego.

While I will be returning to this reading of Kristeva throughout this chapter, at this juncture it may be useful to consider possible analogies between her anti-dialectical 'geometry' of linguistic meaning and music. An influential strain in music scholarship (extending in variations from Plato, through Schopenhauer, to Nietzsche and several contemporary composers, among them Messiaen) holds that music is unconfined by referential language and is, therefore, the *pure* (sometimes *purest*) language of the human soul; of its longings and its desires. In not signifying (literally), music can express the nuances of *being* without confining them to clumsy lexical categories or reducing them to grammar. This version of Romantic idealism (for which, no matter how unpopular, there are many defences²) might suggest that music is more proximate to the semiotic than (even) poetic language, that it nestles in the *chora* more completely than poetic utterances, which, by definition, undergo the *thetic* moment, the translation of desire into the symbolic. To claim that all music stands in a particular relation to desire is counter-productive, though. It creates, for instance, an equivalence between the highly codified practice of the baroque fugue and an erupting solo by Ornette Coleman. We need, if Kristeva's theory is to be useful in analysis, to consider each work of music (or each style of performance) in relation to the codes of practice from which it emerges or which it transgresses; to find the musical equivalent of the semiotic and symbolic *in each instance*. It is the search for equivalents in the representation of jazz that is the foundation of much of the ensuing analysis in this chapter.

A parenthetical observation: in representing code-breaking jazz which manifests the

² It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to consider them in detail, but one might think here of the use of music in psychotherapy (particularly with trauma patients), the effect of music in meditation (as well as other mystical practices) and the popular perception that music can 'speak' the emotional and desirous aspects of the self in a direct way.

irruption of the semiotic, writers often confront the 'edge' of language, the limits of the symbolic. In the above extract, Bolden's 'Roar' is, in the move to onomatopoeia,³ an attempt to replicate the sonic moment without adjectival predication or figuration. In its illusion of the presence of the sound itself, the onomatopoeia announces both a perceived inadequacy of language (the failure of the symbolic at this point) and the extent to which the music is in excess of it. The onomatopoeia is, thus, a form of *aposiopesis* in its implicit assertion that the sound, often in its effects, is too awesome to put into words. All that remains for the author confronted by the relative absence of lexemes which describe 'the hearing sense modality' (Kivy 1984:64) is to use sonic resemblance (roar, howl, groan, crash, or Kerouac's 'EE-de-lee-yah!') which, though woefully inadequate, remains unsullied by the compromise entailed by entry into the symbolic. I have not encountered a use of onomatopoeia in jazz literature which gives, in my opinion, any real sense of the presence of the sound in the text; which can either stand for the irruption of the symbolic in some pure form or which can simply make the reader *hear*.

What I take from Kristeva is the idea of liminal identity: that individuals are in a perpetual state of *becoming* at the border of desire and expression. This seems a useful conceptual framework for understanding much of the mythos of jazz improvisation in literature. The 'symbolic order' of linguistic codes does not correspond in all ways to codes of musical practice.⁴ It is, though, possible to argue that music which remains within the conventions of particular codes is distinct, in important ways, from that which ruptures codes. The notion of rupture (in Kristeva's terms *revolution*) suggests, in musical terms, the introduction of elements from other codes of musical practice or from the matrix of *noise* against which codes are established at their origin. It is worth mentioning that such ruptures mobilize or evoke the code they unsettle. Many representations of crisis moments in jazz configure an

³ The lapse into (inadequate) onomatopoeia in moments of extremity is apparent in the sections of Kerouac's *On the Road* discussed in the previous chapter.

⁴ See a detailed discussion of this in Perlman, Alan M. & Greenblatt, Daniel. 1981. Miles Davis Meets Noam Chomsky: Some Observations on Jazz Improvisation and Language Structure, in *The Sign in Music and Literature*, edited by Wendy Steiner. Austin: University of Texas Press.

inevitable outside (of all codes) from which a 'new sound' emerges and suggest the evolution of a new code *ex nihilo*. Code-breaking is, though, always contextual: the sonic extremity which wrenches the code apart is extreme in terms of particular conventions only. In speaking, therefore, of code-breaking, it may be worth remembering that the process is more implicated in tradition, more imbedded in persistence, than representations of the performer as Romantic revolutionary imply.

Why this emphasis on code-breaking? In Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the semiotic emanates from the drives which, desirous in their aspect and forceful in their manner, attenuate to breaking-point the capacity of codes of expression. The semiotic ruptures these codes, initiating new possibilities of expression and, consequently, different processes of being. Jazz music (according to its mythos) prizes, above all else, the new. The music is *about* innovation and the extent to which an innovation recasts potential expressivity.⁵ Revolutionary or limit performances, in the course of which the tradition is realigned as new codes of musical practice emerge, are generally represented as libidinal excess and/or the irruptions of drives: moments at which desire floods the expected, the regulated and the codified. On one level, the body (made immanent through the drives) is always present in music. Just as the symbolic plane of language is comprised of the traces of all previous irruptions of the semiotic, so codes of musical practice are the codifications of earlier *revolutions*, prior incursions of desire. But it is not the repetition of the past which commonly attracts jazz novelists and poets: it is crisis moments (such as Bolden's performance in Liberty-Iberville) or their poignant elusiveness (as in John Clellon Holmes's *The Horn*) around which most jazz narratives and representations are configured. The revolutionary moment is, though, the basis of so many representations of jazz not only because it is then that musical history is seemingly made. These crisis moments are also moments of subjectification. It is then, at the confluence of desire and its expression, that the

⁵ Think of the status accorded the following moments in jazz history: Louis Armstrong's initiating improvisations on the 'Hot Seven Sides,' Charlie Parker's solo on 'Koko', the recoding of Miles Davis's *The Birth of the Cool*, John Coltrane's *Ascension* session, Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* and the original fusion work of both Donald Byrd and Miles Davis. Whatever the particularities, jazz fans are adept at choosing a series of 'revolutionary' moments by which to configure the development of the music.

individual performer is in the process of emergence as a (musical) subject; that the individual is seen as *becoming* in the combination of drives and their expression. And it follows that this process, so compelling to signify upon, is also, because of the degree to which it is in excess of the symbolic, the most resistant to representation.

Engh, in her essay on Barthes's musicological theorizing, discusses his non-idealism, his particular version of analytical *erotic corporeality* which derives from the work of Kristeva (Barthes was, of course, the supervisor of Kristeva's doctoral thesis which became *Revolution in Poetic Language*).

Traditional musical analysis usually proceeds as if music were non-referential. Implicitly (positivism's silent idealist partner), beyond itself, beyond its formal systems, music has been imagined to refer to something like the soul or spirit, to the very essence of the divine or the human mind, so that, paradoxically, what matters most [...] literally 'doesn't matter'. Barthes outmanoeuvres all of these debates with the simple insight that the music's referent is the body. (Engh in Solie 1993:73.)

Barthes's characteristically flamboyant theoretical move, 'making music matter', is an attempt to free music from the tyranny of adjectival predication by displacing the 'fringe of contact between music and language' (Barthes 1984:181). This 'displacement' is achieved by a recourse to the body. In the essay to which Engh refers, Barthes speaks not of music generally, but of vocal performance in particular, introducing the concept of the *grain of the voice* to express the presence of the body in music.

The 'grain' is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs. If I perceive the 'grain' in a piece of music and accord this 'grain' a theoretical value [...] I inevitably set up a new scheme of evaluation which will certainly be individual – I am determined to listen to my relation with the body of the man or woman singing or playing and that relation is erotic.... (Barthes 1984:188)

Barthes derives his new aesthetic through an application of Kristeva's classifications, *pheno-text* and *geno-text*, to musical performance. In his analysis of the 'style' of two vocalists (Panzeria and Fischer-Dieskau), Barthes extends Kristeva's *pheno-text* to the notion of the *pheno-song*. It stands for the performance, or those aspects of a performance, which repeat, however well, all that would be expected in terms of the (symbolic) codes of musical performance, but does not induce *jouissance* in the listener. All aspects of music which are conventionally valued, 'everything which it is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural values' (1984:182), are aspects of the *pheno-song*. The *geno-song*, on the other hand, is marked by materiality. At the point at which 'the melody works at the language – not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sound-signifiers...' (Barthes 1984:183), the *geno-song* manifests the body (here the somatic, visceral, breathing body) in the voice. This presence induces *jouissance* in the listener. In this instance, *jouissance* for Barthes suggests an erotic response in the course of listening, an embodied (often rapturous and playful) reception of the body of the performer. Both the insertion of the singer's body into the music and its recovery by the listener are inextricably linked to the drives. *Jouissance* is a play of the semiotic across the surfaces of the symbolic.

Barthes develops, from the conceptual scheme of Kristeva's text, a basis for distinguishing types of music and assessing their relative merits. At two points in his essay, he gestures towards modern popular music as an alternative to the disembodied, encoded practices of most Western classical music. This move is not uncommon in music scholarship. Jazz, as a foundational instance of the popular, regularly enters discourses as an alternative to the encoded formality and disembodied nature of Western classical music: as a *geno-song* weighing in against the stultifying tradition of the *pheno-song*. The 'grain of the voice' seems, to so many commentators, everywhere apparent in jazz (not only in the breathy eroticism of many jazz/blues vocals, but in the 'raunchy' or 'cooly erotic' vocalization of cornets, trumpets, saxophones, clarinets and trombones). Jazz, then, comes to stand *for* the *geno-song* in many representations; it comes to be a tradition of materiality, of embodied music which is primarily erotic in its emphasis and effect. Barthes's extension of Kristeva's textual theory of the relation of desire to practice, is by no means the only possible application of the distinction between the semiotic and symbolic, but it does offer a useful

frame for considering the *representation* of jazz. While Barthes does not do so in his work, there is a tendency in theorizing that would place all jazz in a certain relation to the body, that would make of it only *pheno-song*. To do so is, of course, to flatten the jazz tradition which can usefully be considered in terms of the distinction itself. It seems obvious that the jazz tradition includes performances distinctly embodied (from Billie Holiday, through Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman to Joshua Redman) and performances which are markedly 'classical' in the sense of aspiring to the condition of the *pheno-song* (from The Modern Jazz Quartet, through Dave Brubeck, to contemporary musicians as diverse as Keith Jarrett, Terence Blanchard and Bob James). Nevertheless, the recurrence of the body in representing jazz, the perpetual materiality of its crisis moments and the immanence of the erotic, make Barthes's notion of the *grain* of music useful for analysing literary representations.

Let me summarize, before continuing, by returning to the example of Ondaatje's representation of Bolden's final performance. Considering the representation of the culmination of his desire to play/to be, we can see several potential uses of the foregoing discussion of Kristeva and Barthes. Bolden is at a crisis point of his journey of becoming: his desire and his music are, for the first time, at one *because* both are (in a distinctly Lacanian move) reflected by the mirroring vocalist. The force of this confluence and recognition is rupturing. In the mirror of reciprocation, Bolden sees his *self*: he sees the conditions of its emergence, its abiding isolation (at all moments but this) and its fragility when desire is fulfilled. Bolden's body flows into the music (literalizing the *geno-song*). His drives become actualized in a process which culminates in the rupturing of his body and mind (like a bacchic dismemberment, force intrudes, obliterating the forms that would seek to contain it). There is no division between his body, following its irruption in sound, and the music. The performance *is* libidinal (as sonic) force, the Apollonian dream of pure form having been rent by the force of desire. The music (analogous in this representation to the ruptured *symbolic* of poetic discourse) transports Bolden to heights of eroticism: a complete immersion in a materiality which reduces the cornet and the sounds it produces to extensions

of his body. The strident eroticism of his playing (its phallicism⁶) induces a *jouissance* in the singer who hands her body over to the music and, hence, to Bolden's desires of which it is comprised. Her singing meets the body which, having flooded to his throat, sounds off in the music. In its reciprocation of Bolden's body in (and then through) his music, her performance is equivalently erotic and embodied. Thus two subjects, having enticed each other to the border of desire and expressivity, experience the co-extension, both individually and together, of their music and being. At this point, to play is to have all of the self in the throat and to have it burst into the world as a declaration of identity. As will be discussed, this and other representations in jazz literature might function as a model for conceptualizing processes of identity in performance, one which eliminates the mind/body dualism which plagues so many positions on music.

Before ranging more widely among literary representations of performing jazz bodies, it is useful to consider the status of live performances in jazz as opposed to other music forms. It is easy to essentialise this difference, something done regularly in musicological theory and constantly in literary representations of jazz. It is, though, revealing to consider jazz in terms of *authenticity* and *aura*⁷ (Benjamin 1992:215). Jazz, in dispelling the fetish of the work by emphasizing the process of performance, often locates the authentic music in the body of a particular performer. If jazz is a competence, what a musician *does* under specific conditions is the actualization of the art. No individual work (especially a recorded opus) can, according to this extreme position, claim authenticity since it lacks the aura of the original located and embodied performance. A useful way of approaching this key question is through an argument advanced by Goehr in the article 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance' (1995–6). Goehr distinguishes two evaluative inclinations in assessing performance and, in distinguishing them, suggests two useful

⁶ Representations of 'phallicist' trumpet playing are examined in Gabbard, Krin. 1995. Signifyin(g) the Phallus: *Mo' Better Blues* and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet, in *Representing Jazz*, edited by Krin Gabbard. Durham: Duke University Press. His study is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

⁷ Benjamin's sense that the original of a work of art has 'authority' through existing in only one place at one time. Benjamin, Walter. 1992. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Fontana Press: 214–6.

perspectives on embodiment. Her analysis pertains to Western classical music, but is pertinent to jazz precisely because her second category seems so apposite for thinking about jazz improvisation.

'The perfect performance of music is the perfect performance of a work' (Goehr 1995–6:7). In this first case, the work is sacred. It is considered to have a transcendental identity independent of performance, and any rendition is held as more or less successful in actualizing the work itself. The performing body of the musician is reduced to a conduit, a means of gaining access to the greater reality of 'the music itself'. This approach is epitomised by Wagner's desire for 'distancing and invisibility' (1995–6:9) in performance, a desire which culminated in the architectural and spatial prescriptions in *Bayreuth*, particularly his insistence on a concealed orchestra. For Wagner, in all his Romantic idealism, disembodiment was a priority in music, for the presence of bodies (moving, sweating) was for him a distraction from the sublimity of the work. Bodies, in all of their 'impurity,' taint the ideals of being, the noble aspirations of the human spirit which only music can express or, at least, gesture towards.

The contrary view, Goehr's second case, is 'the perfect musical performance'. Here the role of performers is far more complex than simply bridging the gap between audience and opus. Rather, musicians actualize a specifically located and unique 'work' that is as much about *their* performance as it is about the existing composition.

[Performers] describe their performance space as an occasion for the theatrical expression of spontaneity, immediacy and freedom, of feeling and breathing, of conviction and commitment. It is the space, they have said, in which they bring the works out of the abstract dead museum and infuse them with dramatic vitality.
(1996:13)

In this reading of musical performance, 'the formal, visual choreography of [performers'] musical movements' (1996:18) becomes part of the audience's access to the music if not part of the music itself. Music, rather than an abstracted work, is music being made, the

embodied actualization of a score and the performers' (living, breathing) intervention in it. The epithets Goehr quotes, 'spontaneity, immediacy and freedom', are the clarion calls of jazz, which has a tenuous, and often oppositional, relationship with the musical score. Improvisation, radical invention, transgression, violation of expectations and dialogical practice, all of which are often taken to be the qualities of 'good jazz' if not the defining characteristics of jazz *per se*, remove it from the arena of the transcendent work and situate it, along with other improvised music forms, in Goehr's second stream of analysis. When Phil Urso, who was taking up one of the tenor chairs in Woody Herman's band, was asked by the leader how well he could read music, he replied, 'Just enough so that it doesn't screw up my jazz' (Crow 1990:50). This dislocation from the written score, and the attendant disparagement of musicians who were dependent on written arrangements, is an evaluative definition of jazz common among musicians and writers. Jazz, the mythos would have it, is about activity. It is about *intervening* in an array of popular tunes (or standards) which are seemingly limited in their potential and *doing* something new, special and surprising with them.

Jazz, then, is commonly held to be the opposite of a written score, as dislocated from the text.

Jazz is the one music where perfect replication is not only considered less than ideal, but a downright negation of the innovative aspects of solo and ensemble performance. (Horowitz 1982:75)

The measure of performance is not the presentation of the work, nor is the audience measuring the *correctness* of an interpretation. Rather the audience traces, what Gioia terms the 'retrospective' (as opposed to the blueprint) creation of form.

The improviser may be unable to look ahead at what he is going to play, but he can look behind at what he has just played; thus each new musical phrase can be shaped with relation to what has gone before. He creates his form *retrospectively*. (1988:61)

While improvisation never arises *ex nihilo* (there are always learned phrases, stock responses, consensual progressions and lines) the audience nevertheless witnesses the emergence of a retrospective form. To all intents and purposes, although the terms are not really apposite, the audience witnesses the simultaneous composition and performance of the work. Liberty from the text comes at the cost of an extremity quite unique to jazz. So far in this chapter, the represented limit-experience of jazz performance has been discussed in terms of desirous irruption or *jouissance*. The simultaneity of creating and playing has, though, important implications, for the representations of jazz bodies.

Much of the rhetoric of this chapter is gathered around the notions of 'extremity' and 'limit'. My contention is that many literary representations of jazz, admittedly embedded in a Romantic mythos, seek out (or configure) the outer reaches of the existential act of improvisation and perform a recourse to, an insertion of, bodies at these points. We need, before proceeding, to consider further the idea of the 'extreme occasion' (Said 1991:18) in jazz. Having conjectured that the limit-experience induces the irruption of the semiotic and a flood of *jouissance*, it becomes necessary to consider the nature of 'extremity' in jazz performance. Comparing, albeit briefly, classical to jazz performances (keeping Goehr's distinction in mind) is informative.

In his analysis of classical music, Said characterizes 'extreme occasions' as

something beyond the everyday, something irreducibly and temporally not repeatable, something whose core is precisely what can be experienced only under relatively severe and unyielding conditions. (1991:18)

According to Said (1991:3), the compulsory silence, the intense attention which verges on reverence, places the classical music audience as a submissive partner in an experience which verges on sado-masochism. The classical musician is an expert, is in possession of a knowledge (of the score, of musical interpretation and of technique) beyond the comprehension of most of the audience. In the face of this knowledge-power, the audience sits in silent admiration in the hallowed space of the concert hall.

Jim Merod makes the point that Said 'scorns music so vulgar and rough with energy as Parker's and Armstrong's and Monk's' (1992:193). Despite his disparaging attitude towards the art, Said's idea of extremity has interesting resonances for jazz. Jazz performances (at times to performers' chagrin) are seldom characterized by audience silence,⁸ and there is a far greater interaction between musicians and musicians and the audience than in other music forms. The 'extremity' of jazz, therefore, lies less in conventional reverence, obliged respect or the creation of hallowed cultural spaces and rituals.⁹ Rather, the contingencies of improvisation create unique extremities and generate a series of cultural meanings which make an audience experience the occasion as a series of narrowly-averted dangers. The audience, compelled to read an emerging work with which they cannot be familiar, is constantly aware that the musician is creating a work of art in their presence. This sense, of a tightrope walker who also has to fashion the rope on which he or she walks, creates the unique *aura* of jazz and is, at least in part, the cause of the tension, the edginess of both improvisers and their audiences.

This tension seems to implicate bodies in at least three ways. Firstly, the audience, confronting the crisis of reading an emergent (and, therefore, new) work, tends to anchor readings in whatever is available, and the body becomes an important harbour of significance. Secondly, without subscribing to the stereotype that jazz is an inherently neurotic art form, simultaneous composition and performance entails a complete involvement of the musician: it often seems as if, given the anguish of the simultaneity, performers are immersed (body and soul) in the creative act. Finally, if the eroticism of jazz

⁸ This assertion flies in the face of the concert tradition which dominates contemporary and *avant-garde* jazz in many cultural contexts. I have witnessed Abdullah Ibrahim stop playing until a fidgeting audience member settled and have seen Hugh Masekela berate an audience for inadequate attention (to what was, on the night, rather average music). A case could be made that an improvised solo concert by, say, Joe McPhee, Bheki Mseleku or Keith Jarrett, might be more appositely described as 'sado-masochistic' in Said's terms. Interestingly, literary jazz eschews the concert tradition and several discussions inflected with a Romantic ideology of jazz see it as anathema to the spirit of the music and its history. Literary jazz tends to happen in clubs.

⁹ Jazz, as will emerge in the discussion of sacred spaces in the next chapter, does have rituals through which a sense of the sacred is created. These, though, tend to relate to a tradition very different from the 'high culture' of Western classical music.

and the process of *becoming* entailed in improvisation can be accounted for as I have done in this chapter, then it seems clear that the divisions between jazz music and bodies, between desire and the discipline of performance, are tenuous in the lived reality of the music.

The lengthy foregoing discussion, seemingly detached from literary texts, creates a framework for the analyses which follow. Many representations of jazz are based in some variation of the ideas discussed. To use a musical analogy: these ideas function in the present chapter as the basis on which many literary texts can be read as improvisations and variations. It is to *Coming Through Slaughter*, which functioned as the theme for the initiating riffs in this discussion, that I now return.

I suggested at the outset that Bolden, in the mythos of jazz, is an initiating enigma, an absent–presence configured retrospectively in anecdotal improvisation. In the novel he is represented as resisting recording, as refusing to leave a disembodied trace of himself on an Edison wax cylinder.

There was no control except the *mood* of his power [...] and it is for this reason that it is good that you never heard him play on recordings. If you never heard him play some place where the weather for instance could change the next series of notes – then you *should* never have heard him at all. He was never recorded. He stayed away while others moved into wax history, electronic history, those who later said that Bolden broke the path. It was just as important to watch him stretch and wheel around on the last notes or to watch nerves jumping under the sweat on his head. (1984:37)

Bolden's music is represented as radically situated, as definitively contextual. Responsive rather than transcendent, it is shown to be contingent on circumstances, to be enmeshed in the conditions of its emergence. The music would be compromised if *dis-located* from the site ('some place') or occasion of its performance: 'it dated in half an hour' (1984:35). Here, then, is the antithesis of idealism, of a faith in the abiding truth of a work and its capacity to speak across time. The measure of jazz, it would seem from this valorization of temporal

fragility, is its dedication to the moment. In this, improvisation resists memorialization; it decries the compromise of fixity. Any record¹⁰ (analogical, digital, notational) is a separation from context and, therefore, an elision of the performing body. Recordings are inadequate to the process of becoming precisely because, in their stasis and their repeatability, they remove the performance from the context of the performer's body and the location of that body in time, among other performing bodies and with respect to an audience.

It may seem simply rhetorical to juxtapose idealism and corporeality in an analysis of representational practice. *Coming Through Slaughter* is, though, an episodic novel in which most episodes implicate the emergent identity of Buddy Bolden and his sexuality in the space of his cornet playing. Throughout the novel, sex and music combine to form the kingpin in the arc of Bolden's becoming (and it is their merging in his final performance, discussed earlier, which is the climax of the novel¹¹). His hedonism, his existential commitment to the moment which organizes the narrative, suggests the lived equivalent of Bolden's jazz. His identity is invested in improvisation (from his ateleological relationships to his composition of elaborate fictions for *The Cricket*) and this improvisation entails a course predominantly dictated by desires. His life of sex, booze and music is the archetypical life of the jazz musician committed to a succession of emergences (emergencies). Bolden's identity, like his music, is a located process which does not lend itself to abstraction and it, too, is centrally about the irruptive and fragmenting consequences of desire colliding with systems of significance in his world.

¹⁰ Jed Rasula, 's 'The Media of Memory: The Seductive Menace of Records in Jazz History' in Gabbard, Krin (ed.) *Jazz Among the Discourses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) discusses 'what and how recordings testify, particularly in that evidential scenario which is called history' (1995:135). His argument, while not reclaiming authority for records, demonstrates the historical naivete of simply demonising the recording process. Such rejection might simply be another form of jazz Romanticism.

¹¹ There are interesting similarities between Bolden's epiphanic performance and the climactic 'bird-girl' episode toward the conclusion of the penultimate chapter of Joyce's high-modernist *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. (Joyce, James. 1992. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin: 185-6.)

Reminiscent of writing on the body, inscribing it with a sequence of signifiers which configure desire into manageable systems of meaning, Bolden signifies on the body of Robin Blewitt by playing her like a cornet. In this scene the two are in bed while her husband is downstairs.

She was conscious that while they spoke his fingers had been pressing the flesh on her back as though he were plunging them into a cornet. She was sure he was quite unaware, she was sure his mind would not even remember. It was part of the conversation held with himself in his sleep. [...] But she was wrong. He had been improving on *Cakewalking Blues*. (1984:59)

For Bolden, his instrument (the cornet) and his carnality are expressions of the totality of his drives. The novel (and Bolden's emergent identity) is structured around translations between his sexuality and his musical improvisations. Bodies (his own, those of his lovers, that of the vocalist) and the cornet blur endlessly, becoming channels of semiotic irruption, places at which the order of the world gives way to the force of desire.

In 'Signifyin(g) the Phallus: *Mo' Better Blues* and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet' (1995), a playful essay to which paraphrase does a disservice, Krin Gabbard suggests that the jazz trumpet can be conceived as a particular instance of 'phallicism'.

As with many aspects of black culture, jazz provided its practitioners with wide latitude for expressing masculinity while avoiding the less mediated assertions of phallic power that were regularly punished by white culture. If it is true that no one ever possesses the phallus of the father – the first phallus that anyone desires – then all of us, male and female alike, are castrated. The trumpet can then be conceptualized as a compensatory, even hysterical mechanism to ward off castration. (1995:108)

Gabbard then sets about an analysis of Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues* (1990) and of its precursors, the films *Young Man with a Horn* (1950) and *Five Pennies* (1959). In each he

identifies a semiotic connection between the horn and the phallus. He sees the phallicism of the trumpet as residing in 'pitch, speed of execution, and emotional intensity' (1995:108): to play high and fast is to play in the phallic style. The young Miles Davis, therefore, with his 'spikes into the upper register, fast runs throughout the range of the instrument, and an often exaggerated feel for climaxes' (1995:110) was about as phallic as they come. Davis's later modal improvisations, and the contemporary practitioners of this style (among whom are Wynton Marsalis, Wallace Rodney, Marlon Jordan and Terence Blanchard), are described as 'post-phallic' (1995:111). Gabbard then maps the trials and tribulations of various screen trumpeters illustrating the equation between musical and sexual potency (the shifts from phallic to post-phallic performances) and the dominance of bourgeois sexual mores in cinematic representations of jazz. Rather than summarize his analyses, here is an extract from the essay, the style of which speaks even louder than the content.

As some reviewers of *Mo' Better Blues* observed, Rick Martin (Kirk Douglas), the eponymous hero of *Young Man with a Horn*, bears a certain resemblance to Bleek Gilliam [the hero of Spike Lee's film] in that both trumpeters are obsessive artists torn between two women. In part because he has married the emasculating Amy North (Lauren Bacall) instead of the nurturing Jo Jordan (Doris Day), Rick cannot command the upper register at a recording session with singer Jordan. Stricken with panic, he begins a long decline that culminates when he collapses in the street, his castration made explicit as a car runs over his trumpet. (1995:115)

Gabbard's analysis, while based on any number of assumptions (the *assumed* connection between the high register and orgasm, for example, is a little vexing), does explain a very common equivalence in figuration in jazz literature. It can certainly be extended to *Coming Through Slaughter*.

At several points in the narrative, Bolden's playing prowess parallels his sexuality. In bed with Robin Blewitt, in that silent, intimate (and successful) concert, he turns her body into an instrument on which he plays. One phallus, it would seem, is necessarily haunted by the other. The most obvious example, though, is his final performance. His cornet strident,

Bolden is clearly playing in the phallic style. The instrument, as it travels into the upper registers, is metamorphosed into a javelin which 'spears' the singer. While the connection of phallus and instrument can be readily parodied (and a parody would not do justice to the nuances of Ondaatje's text), the equivalence of music and desire it suggests is central in the novel. However, rather than simply configuring the trumpet as a signifier for the phallus, the novel suggests that Bolden's sexuality and music emerge from equivalently intense drives. Bolden is represented as striding along the boundary of his desires and meaning, as navigating the border of the semiotic and the symbolic. It is these existential navigations, at the interstices of desire and music, which are the processes of Bolden's identity. It is clearly in improvisations (certainly musical, but perhaps ontological as well) that Bolden generates meaning at the border between forms and force, music and noise, desire and discipline, mind and body.

While it is not my intention (nor is it possible) to validate literary representations of jazz performance by comparing them to 'real' accounts of performance, juxtaposing the two can be informative. Both literary and oral accounts of jazz use equivalent strategies to organize space, to negotiate the relations between aspects of the self and to put music in its place. Compare, for example, the following two passages, the first from *Coming Through Slaughter* and the second from Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (1994).

Every note new and raw and chance. Never repeated. His mouth also moving and trying to mime the sound but never able to for his brain had lost control of his fingers. (1984:95)

The dance of agile fingers on the keyboard can infuse melodic patterns with swing. Furthermore, as students learn early, the body can engage itself directly in the composition of new phrases, revealing its own capacity for creative thinking. 'Sometimes the ideas come from my mind, and I have to find them quickly on my horn,' Harold Ousley says. 'But other times, I find that I am playing from finger patterns; the fingers give it to you' [...] They roam around and come up with ideas that I like.' (Berliner 1994:190.)

These are positions analogous to Merleau-Ponty's 'existential integration'. In both instances, musicians experience the collapse of the division between mind and body. The cognitive and the somatic blur, making it impossible to attribute the power of origination solely to either. This reintegration, through the dissolution of the Cartesian model of selfhood, is eloquently set out, as are many of its implications, by David Sudnow in his annals of learning jazz piano, *The Ways of the Hand* (1993).

For there is no melody, there is only melodying. And melodying practices are handful practices as soundly aimed articulatory reaching. [...] I learned [the language of jazz melodying] through five years of hearing it spoken. I had come to learn, overhearing and overseeing this jazz as my intractable hands' ways – in a terrain nexus of hands and keyboard whose respective surfaces had become known as the respective surfaces of my tongue and teeth and palate are known to each other – that this jazz music *is* ways of moving from place to place as singing with my fingers. To *define* jazz (as to describe any phenomenon of human action) is to *describe* the body's ways. (Sudnow 1993:146.)

In reviewing *The Ways of the Hand*, Hubert L. Dreyfus (quoted in the MIT edition) claimed that the text was an instance of 'original and detailed phenomenology of the sort that philosophers such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty promised but seldom carried out' (1993:cover). Sudnow's meticulous mapping of the movement from cognition to embodied practice in the process of learning, from 'noun to verb' (Mackey 1993:265), has implications both for phenomenology and for jazz aesthetics. Not only does it detail a process of existential integration (as a liberation from a dualism it stages as oppressive) and show how the instrument becomes a *res extensa* of the body, it also suggests that jazz should be defined by a description of 'the body's ways'. This supports Gioia's 'aesthetics of imperfection' (1988:68) which also emphasizes the *doing* aspect of improvisation: that in assessing a performance one should look, not to the formal properties of work, but to what an individual does in specific circumstances. We cannot, in any simple sense, divide the mind from the hand. 'Feeling' in jazz, that dominant signifier in so many representations, can be taken both ways. Representations of jazz which 'describe the body's ways' might, therefore, be close

to definitions of the music. Perhaps, in looking at representations of jazz bodies, a critic might perform an 'articulational reaching' towards a music which famously resists formal definition.

It remains now to range more widely through jazz literature looking at descriptions of bodies in performance. In his evocative, if mythomaniac, collection of fictional jazz portraits, *But Beautiful: A Book About Jazz* (1991), Geoff Dyer describes Thelonious Monk.¹²

You had to see Monk to hear his music properly. The most important instrument in the group – whatever the format – was his body. He didn't play the piano really. His body was the instrument and his piano was just the means of getting the sound out of his body at the rate and quantities he wanted. If you blotted out everything except his body you would think he was playing the drums, foot going up and down on the high-hat, arms reaching over each other. His body fills in all the gaps in the music; without seeing him it always feels as if something is missing but when you see him even piano solos acquire a sound as full as a quartet's. The eye hears what the ear misses. (1991:32)

Dyer depicts Monk's music as a filigree of traces, as if it comprises only the decorative parts of a bridge with the supporting spars absent, but absorbed into the ornamentation (Dyer 1991:34). Phrases and ideas are hinted at, left incomplete and sometimes, as Monk changes his mind and moves his hands above the keyboard without striking the keys, left silent. His is a music of aporia. It is these spaces that Monk's body (the rhythm of his stamping feet, the movement of his hands, his giant swirling body) articulates. His body makes the silence, from which his music emerges and against which it is defined, *speaks*. More than a supplement, it performs a corporeal mapping of a silence, a process which completes the work itself. In Charlotte Zwerin's compilation of archive footage of Monk (1989), *Straight No Chaser*, which Dyer attributes as one of his sources, the camera alternates between the

¹² In a rhetorical flourish which is rather frustrating given the focus of this dissertation, Thelonious Monk is reputed to have said 'writing about music is like dancing about architecture' (quoted in Krin Gabbard's introduction to *Representing Jazz* 1995:3)

hands and feet of Monk, both close-ups of Monk in motion. Their intricate dance compels attention, not simply as spectacle, but because, at moments, they offer what is only implied about the patterns of the music. Monk's hands and feet confound the border between a musical 'inside' and 'outside'; they give the music, which often sounds as if it has 'been constructed entirely from mistakes' (Dyer 1991:34), a fleeting, varying coherence. In the performance sequences in *Straight No Chaser*, Monk visibly feels his way through the process of jazz. I share Dyer's feelings on listening to, without seeing, Monk: 'it always feels as if something is missing'. What is missing, of course, is his body: the palpable site of the emergence of the music, its mapping of silent spaces and the 'singing with [his] fingers' (Sudnow 1993:146).

Dyer also represents Monk's piano as an instrument for 'getting the sound out of his body'. It, like an 'instrument' a body builds to 'project [...] around itself a cultural world' (Merleau-Ponty 1962:146), is both co-extensive with and a means of extending his body into the world. The piano makes it possible for Monk to make his world heard and demarcate, through a signature acoustics, his identity and situation. There is, of course, much to be said about the individual's musical language as a 'narrative' of identity, about having a 'sound' (this is a notion to which I return in this and the next chapter). For now, the relation of this 'individual sound' to the body needs to be established. In jazz distinctive sounds are produced by the body's distinctive positioning on the instrument. The individuation of sound, which many consider the key to jazz improvisation ('having a sound of one's own'), is, therefore, a function of the distinctive diagrammatic (or uniquely positioned) body actualizing a specific range of the instrument's potential. Dyer says of Monk:

If he'd played Beethoven, sticking exactly to the score, just the way he hit the keys, the angle at which his fingers touched the ivory, would have unsteadied it, made it swing and turn around inside itself, made it a Monk tune. (Dyer 1991:33.)

The way in which the performer's body – hands, lips, breath – angles in on the instrument affects the sound produced. This is apparent with different embouchures of saxophone players, which largely determine the sound the instrument produces. Miles Davis, as it turns out inaccurately, assumed that Coltrane's ability to 'play two notes all at once' was a

function of a missing tooth (Davis 1989:213). Given that music is produced at the surface of contact of the body and the instrument, the 'imperfections' and distinctiveness of the former sound in the music. The instrument is not an autonomous body: it allows the expression of the desires of the musician in the language it can produce, but it is also changed into something particular by the distinctive body of the performer.

An extreme instance of this was Django Reinhardt who, due to the mutilation of his left hand, developed a playing style adapted to his physiological limitations. His style was to affect the tradition of the instrument: in the playing of so many able-fingered guitarists one hears the echoes of Reinhardt's missing fingers. In his poem 'Doctor Jazz,' Michael Longley represents the guitarist in the following terms:

Django Reinhardt

A whole new method compensates
For your damaged fingers: sweat
In the creases of your forehead,
Mother-of-pearl between the frets.

(Longley 1986:103.)

The final image accentuates the equivalence between the body of the musician and the unique instrument which the 'compensation' has 'created'. In an ontological moment, as the existential being of the musician is actualized, it merges with (in being expressed and defined through) the guitar. The body of the performer becomes co-extensive with the instrument and is, as a consequence, present in the music fashioned.

An equivalence between the instrument and the musician's body, effected by a figural merging of one with the other, is common in representations of jazz. In the process of becoming, where the instrument is the site at which the semiotic and (musical) symbolic coincide, it follows that the instrument (or the sound it produces) might well come to stand for the body of the musician; that the two might develop a relational or implicated identity. Here is a representation, again from Geoff Dyer's *But Beautiful*, of the saxophonist, Ben

Webster.

[Webster] had always been heavily, powerfully built and by his mid-thirties you could sense his body waiting for the chance to bulk itself out even more. As time went by his body and his tone became almost identical to one another: big, heavy, round. (1992:85)

Nat Hentoff speaks of sounding yourself: 'a way of moving and shaping music so that if anybody turned on the radio in the middle of a performance, he'd know it was you' (1995:73). One can, simply from their playing a C-natural, distinguish Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins and Zim Ngqawana. The general scepticism which post-structuralism brings to the notion of 'voice' aside, representations of jazz regularly suggest a unique 'speaking' subject present in a signature sound. Becoming accomplished in jazz is, in these representations, a process of individuation, of signing your 'name across the face of the tune'.¹³ Dyer's configuration of the presence of Webster's body in his tone is an instance of individuation; a specific incorporation of the music. If we think back to Barthes for a moment, it is clear that this representational strategy relies on a notion equivalent to 'grain of the voice'. The body of the musician, in all of its particularity, is in the music as it plays.

I would like to dwell on Webster's 'sound' for a moment. Dyer describes Webster as playing 'a ballad like it's a creature so fragile, so cold and close to death that only the heat of your breath can bring it back to life' (1992:86). Webster plays ballads voicing notes, particularly in the lower register, so that they wander back and forth across the boundary between sound and breath. Notes, when they emerge, do so conspicuously out of the breathing of which they are an extension. Hearing Webster's breath is to hear 'the *pneuma*, the soul swelling or breaking' (Barthes 1977:183), but we hear it in conjunction with 'the tongue, the glottis, the teeth, the mucous membranes, the nose' (1977:183). His is a living,

¹³ The phrase is from Smith, C. W. 1990. The Plantation Club, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*, edited by Marcela Breton. New York. Penguin: 204.

breathing body meandering at the border of music, at times lapsing into an unmusical, simply somatic mode. This creates the remarkable sense of 'fragility' to which Dyer refers: the feeling that, at any second, the note may give way to breath or *vice versa*. This fragility is a dramatic counterpoint to the voluptuousness and warmth of Webster's tone. It is his body, inserted into the music in contradictory modes (expansive and fragile), which creates his distinctive voice. Furthermore, Webster maintained, as did Dexter Gordon and other legendary tenors (Giddins 1981:247), that one had to know the words of a song one was performing. The almost discernible syntax of his phrasing (as though singing), combined with his pronounced aspiration and his signature tone, makes Webster's playing (with the conspicuous *grain* of his voice) almost definitively Barthes's '*geno-song*'.

Another instance of resemblance, here metamorphosis of the body into the body of the instrument, reveals the consequences of a special transference that improvisation entails.

Gradually [Mingus] assumed the weight and dimensions of his instrument. He got so heavy that the bass was something he just slung over his shoulder like a duffel bag, hardly noticing the weight. The bigger he got, the smaller the bass became. He could bully it into doing what he wanted. Some people played the bass like sculptors, carving notes out of an unwieldy piece of stone; Mingus played it like he was getting in close, working inside, grabbing at the neck and plucking strings like guts. (1992:95)

Charles Mingus was attempting to exhaust the San Antonio Palacio Del Rio's store of gin fizzes. The bartender told me with a note of awe that the night before, Mingus had thrown down twenty and never shown an indication of disequilibrium. (Ramsay 1989:163.)

Most anecdotes about Mingus, if not about his anger and aggression, are about his prodigious appetite. Several conclude with a figural equivalence: Mingus grew to look like the instrument he played. This literalizes the metaphorical notion that the dedicated musician 'becomes' (in both senses) his instrument. In Dyer's representation, Mingus becomes an

existential subject through his playing and, in tropological logic, grows to resemble the instrument which is the midwife of his *being*. He willfully (all those gin fizzes) transforms himself into a resemblance of the site of his becoming, as though, in some way, this effects an existential integration. This relation of becoming, which is only a literal rendition of the process of identity formation in improvised music, is used to various purposes in jazz discourse. A single instance suffices by way of example:

[Johnny] Hodges played with more self-assurance than almost any other musician I've seen. One exception was Charlie Parker, who became his horn – even when he looked as if he wasn't sure what city he was in. (Hentoff 1996:20)

Expressing this translation of Parker into the saxophone is a means of reflecting dedication; the metonym (he was his horn) suggests the degree of absorption into the art itself. This is a primary function of the instrumental body in representations of jazz.

Romantic idealism, such as that of Wagner, sought the occlusion of the performing body and it is not uncommon for assessments of classical music to specifically laud playing which is seemingly effortless. Dyer's representation of Mingus *accentuates* effort. The physicality of performance, his struggling with the instrument (not unlike the bass saxophonist's primordial battle at the conclusion of Škvorecký's novella, *The Bass Saxophone*), configures music-making as work, as struggle. Depictions of this labour are a spectacle of wrestling with the contingencies of simultaneous composition and performance. Images of jazz musicians labouring, often mobilizing the cultural repository of African American history, are integral to characterizations of jazz. Here is one such instance, quoted in part earlier, from 'The Plantation Club' by C. W. Smith (in Breton 1990:200–221).

We sat five feet away, feeling faint huffs of breath from the horn, the strain of melody and improvised line as tangible as a string of sausages in the air before us. He began to sweat and his cheeks bellowed as he finished his fourth chorus and began working seriously to sign his name across the face of the tune. (Smith 1990:204.)

The effort of creativity, the work required to sound yourself, implicates the entire being of the improvising musician. There is, in the extremity of this effort, no place for the dualism of mind and body.

James Baldwin's 'Sonny's Blues' (in Breton 1990:92–130) includes a telling evocation of the performer's labour.

[T]he man who creates the music [...] is dealing with the roar rising from the void and imposing order on it as it hits the air. What is evoked in him, then, is of another order, more terrible because it has no words, and triumphant, too, for that same reason. And his triumph, when he triumphs, is ours. I watched Sonny's face. His face was troubled, he was working hard, but he wasn't with it. [...] I had never before thought of how awful the relationship must be between the musician and his instrument. He has to fill it, this instrument, with the breath of life, his own. He has to make it do what he wants it to do. (1990:127)

This representation of performance, while steeped in Romantic mythopoesis, is a compelling figuration of the 'extreme occasion' which is improvised performance. Sonny is the labouring creative genius confronting the void; the artist who has to enact a *genesis of order* while being scrutinized (most importantly, by his estranged brother who is coming to terms with his brother's difference, and the significance of his gift, in the course of the performance). Sonny's performance is a *process* of self-validation; it is what he is able to *do* that is the object of representation. He is, in the eyes of his brother, his fellow musicians and the audience, as well as in his own terms, *on trial*. This 'in process/on trial' (Kristeva 1984:58) experience is the extremity at the heart of Sonny's labouring, the sheer effort in which all aspects of his selfhood are implicated. The gaze, here the public ear, induces strain as the musician – whose identity is on the line – works to order the 'terrible' wordless world of sound. The nature of such extreme labour is that it demands every resource the musician has at his disposal.

Returning to Dyer's *But Beautiful*, his depiction of Lester Young, dying in an apartment

across from Birdland, combines the sense of obliterating effort entailed in the jazz life with a depiction of the correspondence of body and sound. In Dyer's representation, Young is fading away physically, but is also fading musically into the tradition he inaugurated. His body is becoming ethereal, a mirror of his whispering and insubstantial (almost gossamer) tone. Collapsing into lightness, into disembodiment, Young is becoming the stuff of sound rather than matter.

He drank to dilute himself, to thin himself down even more. A few days ago he'd cut his finger on an edge of paper and was surprised at how rich and red his blood was, expecting it to be as silver as gin, flecked with red, or pale, pinkish. (1991:5)

He was disappearing, fading into the tradition before he was even dead. So many other players had taken from him that he had nothing left. When he played now cats said he limped along after himself, a pale imitation of those who played like him. At a gig where he played badly a guy came up to him and said, 'You're not you, I'm you.' Everywhere he went he heard people sounding like him. He called everyone Pres because he saw himself everywhere. (1991:7)

Herman Leonard had come to photograph him once but ended up leaving him out of the picture altogether, preferring a still-life of the hat, his sax case and cigarette smoke ascending to Heaven. (1991:9)

Young's disintegration, his etherealization, is a manifestation of the tenuousness and provisionality of *his* performances in particular, performance *per se* and of the identity of the performer. Damaged irreparably by the contingencies of innovation and by the failure of his creativity as he is absorbed into the tradition, Young tends towards absence because he is (due to his influence) present everywhere. His aesthete identity (and corporeality), formed initially in direct contrast to the strident playing of Coleman Hawkins, is represented as enduring but diffuse, in the same way that his sound, his voice, has become dispersed into the bodies and instruments of so many other musicians. He fades into the ether, becomes general, since his 'voice' no longer demarcates where he starts and stops. His is a fragility

of selfhood manifest as the gradual elision of his materiality. In a sense, Young failed his musical trial of identity: in fixing on a sound that could be imitated, he eliminated himself. Any stasis in the process of jazz improvisation, the mythos would have it, is punished. That punishment, given the existential integration entailed in creativity, is regularly inflicted (from within or without) on the body.

Physiological (and psychological) damage is integral to the existential and Romantic mythos of jazz. When Charlie Parker, at the age of thirty-four, died in the flat of Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, the coroner estimated his age as 'between fifty and sixty' (Russell 1972:358). Comparing the famous Caxton photograph (1954) of Chet Baker, seated at a piano resembling a young Elvis Presley, to Guy le Querec's (1988) image of the battle-worn Baker two weeks before his death in Amsterdam, gives a sense of the consequences of a commitment to jazz and various subcultural addictions (alcohol, heroin, experience, practice). It is a common notion that performers' bodies bear the scars, show the traces, of the demands of improvisation. The body becomes, then, inscribed by personal history; a text on which can be read the strife of jazz.

One of the most memorable representations of physical and musical decline is John Clellon Holmes's novel *The Horn* (first published in 1953). It tells the story of Edgar Pool (a fictional composite of Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins), whose playing is superseded by the younger generation of (bebop) players. After losing a 'cutting contest' to the younger Walden, Pool wanders aimlessly through the city; he is dejected, homeless, derelict and is suffering from an array of physical ailments. The transformation in his fortunes is described in terms of changes in the diagrammatic presentation of his performing body.

Edgar Pool blew methodically, eyes beady and open, and he held his saxophone almost horizontally extended from his mouth. This unusual posture gave it the look of some metallic albatross caught insecurely in his two hands, struggling to resume flight. In those early days he never brought it down to earth, but followed after its isolated passage over all manner of American cities, snaring it nightly, fastening his droopy stony lips to its beak, and tapping the song. [...] But time and much music

and going alone through the American night had weakened the bird [...] over the years which saw him age a little and go to fat, which found him more uncommunicative and unjudging of the steady parade of eager pianists and drummers that filed past behind him, the horn came down. (1990:8)

The lowering of the horn suggests the exhaustion and resignation of one who can no longer endure the compulsion to innovate, to perform the irruptions of energies that once put the bird to flight. The wild, but restrained, energy of performance has taken too much out of Pool and he has lapsed into routine. The way he plays, his bodily demeanour and fingering, is altered: his decline can be read across his body. Miles Davis asserted, 'You can tell the way I play by the way I stand' (Sidran 1995:79). Jazz bodies can be read as biographies, but deportment is also, in many representations, an embodied declaration of the music and the changes wrought on it over time.

In the present analysis, there has been a somewhat unexamined assumption. Contrary to trends in contemporary theory, jazz bodies have been discussed as *individual* rather than as constructions of cultural discourses. Representations of jazz, as has been suggested, are embedded in 'myths' of individuality. Just as they shamelessly inscribe the notions of voice and personal expressivity, they map the narrative of jazz history by the beacons of proper nouns. When Miles Davis asserted that the history of jazz could be summed up in four words – Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker – he was suggesting a common inclination in representing jazz. Ted Gioia offers a defence of this 'human element' (1988:68) in jazz on the basis that an individualistic aesthetic is inevitable in an art form that prizes, above all else, the capacity of a musician to navigate an unfolding set of possibilities. An aesthetic which elides the particularities of a performing artist, is bound to overlook defining aspects of jazz. The inevitable extension of this emphasis, though, is the predicament of hero-worship. The myth-making which accompanies personified histories and idolized practitioners leads to misrepresentations of musical practices at every turn. It is, however, exactly the radically situated nature of jazz that facilitates the inscription of bodies as a means to represent the music and to configure the history of its evolution.

This discussion of jazz bodies, of selves in process/on trial at the border of desires and music, has undervalued two central tenets of jazz: its dialogical aspect and the role of the disembodied traces of jazz in recordings. The constitutive role of interaction in jazz performance, the semiotics of stage performance as well as musical communication, is often the fabric of literary representations (if only because it provides a visual clue or a specular rendition of the music and, therefore, facilitates representation). It is with a discussion of communication between musicians, as well as between musicians and audience members, that this chapter proceeds.

In his essay 'Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies' (in Bergeron and Bohlman 1992), Gary Tomlinson signifies on Henry Louis Gates's *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literature*. For Gates, signifyin(g) – the g is in parenthesis to distinguish the particular Africanist/African American practice from the general sense of the word – is 'the trope of tropes in the black vernacular' (Gates 1988:69). It is an practice of figuration, re-figuration and pastiche in or around a text (either spoken, written or musical). It is a dialogic interaction with a text marked by 'irony, parody, needling and trickery' (Tomlinson 1992:65). Arising in African oral traditions, the practice of signifyin(g) is an essential model for an understanding of jazz performance. Take, for example, the 'cutting contest' in jazz. At the Vancouver Jazz Festival, Wynton Marsalis arrived on stage during Miles Davis's set with the intention of engaging him in a cutting contest. Miles's reaction was to tell Marsalis to, 'Get the fuck off the stage!', an action he defends in his biography.

Wynton thinks that music is about blowing people away up on stage. But music isn't about competition, but about co-operation, doing shit together and fitting in. (Davis 1990:365.)

While Davis is correct on one level (co-operation is obviously the basis of ensemble playing), on another he is wilfully overlooking a long tradition of staged antagonism as an organizing trope of jazz performance. In a cutting contest, a musician attempts to outplay his or her opponent (combat and conflict tropes abound in literary representations of cutting) through signifyin(g) on his or her performance. To parody, thereby undercutting and

undermining, an opponent's phrases, or to improve on them by manifesting greater virtuosity, are the techniques of victory. The performance of a musician cannot, then, be meaningfully isolated from its musical context.¹⁴ Whatever its musical qualities, a solo emerges with respect to the possibilities established by others. By logical extension of the earlier discussion, it arises in the context of the desires (bodies) of others. Competitive soloing is only one level on which jazz is dialogic. Most jazz performances entail signifyin(g) on the work that others do: they are responsive, speaking simultaneously to and about others, as well as about the self. In this context 'speaking' is an apposite word, for the practice of signifyin(g) arises, of course, in the oral practices of African cultures.

Ben Sidran's *Black Talk: How the Music of Black America Created an Alternative to the Values of the Western Literary Tradition* (1995), apart from having perhaps the longest title in the history of publishing, presents a somewhat emphatic view of the ways in which black oral culture is an alternative to Western values and practices. His work, analogous in its political agenda to LeRoi Jones's *Blues People* (1963), asserts the validity, autonomy, importance, and exclusivity, of African American culture in the United States. The text is, despite its, at times, intrusively militant tone, replete with useful and provocative discussions. At one point, Sidran argues:

Literate men are prone to use words which force them into simple opposites. This is especially true of written words that depend on the logic of contrasts, types and polarities for their meaning. The failure to categorise emotional content along the rigid lines of verbal definition, a result of the stress on vocalization, has [...] aided the survival of black culture; the celebration of the feeling of any given moment as a

¹⁴ Clint Eastwood, when deciding on music for his film on the life of Charlie Parker, *Bird* (1988), chose to extract original solos from Parker's Savoy and Dial recordings, to 'clean them up' electronically and then to have contemporary musicians play around the solos. Apparently getting the best of both worlds, authenticity and sound quality, this method raises several important questions about the extent to which performances are rooted in the original conditions of their emergence. What, particularly, does one *do* to a solo when one takes it out of context? See Garber, F. 1990. *Fabulating Jazz*, in *Representing Jazz*, edited by Krin Gabbard. Durham: Duke University Press: 88–96, for a vitriolic analysis of Eastwood's decisions.

unique experience, rather than as part of some elaborate syntactical structure, has made the black man flexible and helped him to improvise. (1995: 18)

This emphasis on the relation of orality to immediacy, as well as the idea that a verbal facility is a productive process of intervention, is useful in analysing the ways in which jazz is represented as a cultural practice. The commitment to the moment has been addressed, as has the supposed celebration of 'feeling' in jazz. What, though, are the implications of valorizing the *spoken* word, the liveness of oral communication? If one does not make a fetish of the work, but exalts the process of signifyin(g), one has automatically placed artistic production in a different relation to the body. If one moves away from words on the page, from the fixities of recorded discourse, one arrives under the sign of the verb. In the realm of *doing*, one is placed as an interlocutor: one is responding, developing, inverting, parodying, taunting, affirming, contradicting, commenting or celebrating. In this role the 'speaking' or performing subject (breathing, gesturing, diagrammatic) *is* a body placed in relation to other bodies. Simply stated, modes of artistic practice inflected with oral practices stand in a different relation to the body and this bears on understanding and representing jazz.

The following extract is from an account of a cutting contest in John Clellon Holmes's *The Horn*.

Walden looked at Edgar, sweating now and gloomily intent, and blew four bars of a ringing melody, so compelling that Edgar stumbled taking off, unable to recall himself (for "cutting" was, after all, only the Indian wrestling of lost boyhood summers, and the trick was getting your man off balance). And then Walden came back clear, and knew (now so beyond doubt, he almost faltered) that his was the warmer tone, that this was what he had always *meant*; and so experienced a moment of incredible, hairbreadth joy. (1988:18)

The interaction between Walden and Pool *is* the music that is created and its meaning derives from the interaction itself. The victor, Walden, proves to be the more adept and

versatile of the players; he is able to signify on Pool's playing, demonstrating that, for all of its competence, it lacks the clarity of vision and purpose that characterizes his revisions. Being thereby deposed as the *authority*, Pool's life spirals out of control: in his own understanding of his defeat in the cutting contest, Pool sees himself as having failed a trial, literalizing Kristeva's 'in process/on trial' which has been a touchstone of this chapter. The metaphor of Indian wrestling accentuates the embodied nature of the contest: in wrestling with saxophones Pool and Walden are engaged in a contest of dexterity, strength and resilience. This aesthetic gladiatorial combat sets jazz apart from other forms of musical performance and embodies the music in significant ways. In the extract, the players literally work off one another's performances and it is in the contested site (the contest implicating the entire performing subject) that the music emerges and which it reflects.

The embodiment of jazz in performance is, of course, not apparent only in the tropes of conflict. Representations of jazz frequently rely on the visual choreography of performance. In his analysis of Miles Davis's 'ambiguous symbolic techniques' of communication with band members, Christopher Smith, in an article entitled 'A Sense of the Possible: Miles Davis and the Semiotics of Improvised Performance' (1995), demonstrates how the ambiguous gesture can both lead and shape improvised performance while not foreclosing on the possibilities which might be explored. 'Miles deployed these techniques specifically in order to highlight the interplay of musical procedures and the communicative moment' (Smith 1995:52). This interplay, and the sheer import and implication of gestures, leads Smith to characterize the stage on which improvisation occurs as a ritual space in which constraints exist in productive tension with the possibilities of the *now* (1995:52). Davis emerges as shaping, while not determining, musical possibilities through a complex language of gesture and musical cue. In Smith's analysis, this language at once directs and inspires musicians, but is also a key to the music for an audience. In my experience, a focussed jazz audience (which is not all that common other than at jazz concerts) is hyper-aware of even minor communications between musicians and, in framing the complexities of solos, these moments function as significant organizers of the listening experience. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that in representing performances, it is often gestures to which writers have recourse.

An instance of representing the choreography of performance occurs in Eudora Welty's 'Powerhouse' (in Breton 1990:29–43). In this quite remarkable story (to which I will return at some length in the conclusion of this dissertation), Powerhouse controls his band through an imperious set of verbal cues and gestural signals.

His hands over the keys, he says sternly, "You-all ready? You-all ready to do some serious walking? – waits – then STAMP. Quiet. STAMP, for the second time. This is absolute. Then a set of rhythmic kicks against the floor to communicate the tempo. Then, O Lord! say the distended eyes from beyond the boundary of the trumpets, Hello and goodbye, and they all go down the first note like a waterfall. [...] After a long time, he holds up a number of fingers to tell the band how many choruses still to go – usually five. He keeps his directions down to signals. (Welty 1990:31.)

Powerhouse's gestures, in fashioning the music through controlling the performance, are indices of the music itself, and aspects of the jazz can, therefore, be read and represented through them. Similarly, changing expressions on the faces of performers are read as indications of the mood of playing. The 'distended eyes' of the brass section, for instance, mark the lurch into intensity that Powerhouse determines; they stand for the apprehension about surviving the course chosen by the pianist. It must be added that body language can be used by musicians as a scaffolding of musical ideas, as a way of communicating with the audience something about the music. Gestures, expressions, and deportment are often a contiguous text used by the performer as a form of running exegesis. The body is, then, not always something that simply bears the traces of the deeper fleeting passions of the performer, but might be an intentional text encouraging and framing a particular reception of the music.

Representations of jazz which reflect the music through the communication of players with the audience are legion. Jazz, in its club tradition, eliminates the space between the performers and audience through forms of dialogue: jazz audiences applaud individual solos, respond by shouting encouragement, move to the music and shout out requests, while musicians introduce tunes, comment to the audience and acknowledge audience responses

(in gestures and talk). Jazz performances as social events are highly communicative, and the music arises within the framework of this communication. This suggests that audience reactions can be represented as a means of depicting the music itself: the music can be known, this strategy would have it, by the effect it has on those who hear it.

A delightful representation of an audience member's reaction is in Mezz Mezzrow's 'Dope' (in Campbell 1995). Here the body of the 'afflicted' functions as a site in which the music can be read, at which it can be known by its effect.

Then with one flying leap she sailed onto the bandstand, pulled her dress up to her neck and began to dance. I don't know if dance is the right word for what she did – she didn't move her feet hardly at all, although she moved practically everything else. She went through her whole routine, bumps and grinds and shakes and breaks, making up new twists as she went along, and I mean twists. A bandstand was surely the wrong place for her to do what she was trying to do that night. All the time she kept screaming, 'Cut it out! It's murder!' but her body wasn't saying so. (1995:146)

This immersion in the music is an instance of a common literary strategy: recourse to the bodies of the audience to portray jazz through its effects. Berliner makes the point that 'because of the close association of music and dance in black musical traditions, one indication of successful performances is their effectiveness in inspiring listeners to respond by expressing themselves in varied and subtle ways through myriad forms of dance, as they feel disposed 'to bump and bounce, to slow drag and steady shuffle, to grind, hop, jump, rock, roll, shout stomp' (1994:256). Exuberant reception, which is pivotal in Adorno's critique of jazz,¹⁵ is in other instances an affirmation of the music. The mode of that exuberance (from ecstatic dance to sexual arousal) suggests the *affect* of the music. If we accept that 'the body is the primary site of music' (Johnson 1993:101), perhaps we might concede that representations of bodies relating to others are basic to the music itself.

¹⁵ See Adorno, Theodor W. 1989–1990. *On Jazz*, translated by Jamie Owen Daniel. *Discourse* 12(1). 45–77, for Adorno's most extensive and controversial critique of jazz music and its effect of audiences.

Emphasizing the dialogical emergence of jazz, and its locatedness in the bodies of performers, raises an array of questions concerning its persistence over time. Composed music is stored in scores awaiting actualization, but this is obviously not so with improvised jazz. The question of a repository for a music whose defining attribute is immediacy, preoccupies both jazz scholars and creative writers. Where, other than the (analogical or digital) recording, might *un-played jazz* reside? Given that jazz exists under the sign of the verb and is conceived in terms of its emergence within a specific context, it is regularly represented as 'stored in the performer' (Johnson 1993:3). Less a reservoir of cerebral knowledge, the music is often represented as pre-existing in the choreographic (or diagrammatic) potential of a particular performer's body. Returning to Dyer's *But Beautiful*, he represents Rashaan Roland Kirk as

an encyclopaedia of black music: he stored all of this knowledge not in his head but in his body, not as knowledge but as feeling. He had abolished thought and raised feeling to the level of active intelligence. (1991:101)

This has interesting parallels in Berliner's interviews. He discovered that the 'assimilation of an artist's precise style' is often achieved through 'copying choreography integral to a performance' (1994:109). The inseparability of how an artist moves and the music he or she plays, suggests the possibility of *somatic memory*. To return to Sudnow, if the definition of jazz is a description of the body's ways (1993:146), then arguably the persistence of jazz is a corporeal legacy (a substantial tradition). Positioning the body with respect to the instrument is noticeable, transferable, and potentially archival. If we improvise our body's ways in part by imitation, then the archive of sound exists in the ways that musicians stand, breathe, strike keys, pluck strings, pound drums, or blow into mouthpieces. The representation of this substantial tradition is, then, a version of the history of the music and a continuous translation from the site of its production to the product itself. In this, as in the other forms of recourse to the body, that which seemingly outside of the music (in a Platonic sense, the unseemly materiality of its making), turns out, to all intents and purposes, to be the music itself.

Until now jazz has been discussed as a performance music, but what of, seemingly disembodied, recorded jazz? Benjamin asserts that 'even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' (1992:214). Jazz, because of its interactive nature, seems bound to its context of production in a way distinct from many other art forms. Recording, for this reason, seems a *dis-locating* compromise, a fixing of the emergent and provisional and an elision of the gestural and somatic context of the music. However, records can be thought of as other than inadequate, secondary traces of performances. Jed Rasula points out that records have been integral to jazz history, to the development and dissemination of musical ideas, despite the exaltation of its unrepeatability (1995:135). Jazz is deeply invested in recording and replaying, something masked to an extent by the 'one-take' and 'live-recording' tradition. Rasula repeats an account by Harry Carney of listening to and copying Bechet solos from Johnny Hodges's 'very good record collection'. Countering the linear history of anecdotal 'primal torch-passing scenes', Rasula represents this process as

a primal scene of another sort. Less ennobling perhaps than the initiatory moment of personal origins in which the acolyte receives the benediction of the human god; or trial by fire in a jam session; but a story of origins nonetheless. It turns out to be a constant, if mongrel, accompaniment to jazz history from its beginnings. (1995:141)

On the one hand, then, records are just that: archives of a history which, no matter how persistently degraded, are a body of knowledge, a substantial memory of performance. As icons, these trace embodiments enter representations as both the substance of tradition and as identity fetishes: sacred objects through which the musician or fan achieves an orientation, both in the intricacies of jazz and existentially.

Jazz literature is replete with representations of records, either as icons or as offering the extension of jazz performances into domestic, often intimate, situations. Often records are treated with utter reverence, as if they embody the tradition of jazz and imprecate the (almost metaphysical) presence of the musician. Such is the attitude of Miguel Flores in Willard Marsh's 'Mending Wall' (in Breton 1990:185–199). His desire to be 'American' (he

is Hispanic) is manifested by his cathexis onto his record collection, his ownership of a history and tradition. When he takes two *avant-garde poseurs* to his father's villa, it is a parade of seventy-eights across the phonograph which Miguel uses to assert his modernity and his Americanness, to perform his status as an 'insider'. Things go horribly awry: Harry and Sidecar are disparaging about his taste for traditional (pre-bebop) musicians since they are aspirant bohemian beboppers. They become disrespectful and aggressive toward Miguel and vandalize his father's villa in their hunt for alcohol. By the story's conclusion, Miguel has the two at gunpoint as he systematically shatters each treasured seventy-eight that Harry and Sidecar have not yet destroyed. Miguel positions himself against the disrespect and violence of Harry and Sidecar by destroying the history of which they are, by extension, a part. In doing so it is clear that he is distancing himself from his aspirations to be American and, in embracing a rather stereotyped Hispanic honour-code, is returning to a 'truer identity'.

For the fan, then, jazz knowledge and history are often embodied in a record collection. Records are a tangible investment in jazz. Accusations of the commodification of jazz, that apparently huge compromise of the integrity of the art, overlook the essential role played by record sales in the maintenance of the tradition. In the light of this, James Lincoln Collier makes the point that

the market for jazz records is lodged primarily in the mainly white middle class. Most middle-class people who listen to recorded music at all will have at least a few jazz records of one kind or another on the shelf. It is a terrible irony that jazz has for most of its life got its main support from the very people that the jazz world has seen as the enemy, quintessential squares – accountants, car salesmen, high school teachers, insurance brokers, advertising copywriters. (1993:220)

In considering literary jazz, the relative status accorded embodied performance and the disembodied trace in recordings needs to be taken into account. Following Collier's argument, the record can be considered a specific negotiation of difference, as iconic of translations of identity into the spaces of wishing, as key to white people's experience of

versions of blackness. Records function as tokens of belonging, as a public practice and declaration of identity. In thinking about jazz bodies, while this might seem something of an attenuation, we need to consider the record (purchased, carried, loaned out, danced to) in terms of the material economy of jazz and as fetishes which matter. Rather than simply assemblages of traces, records reach through time and across space with the power to subjectify the listener, to place him or her in a tradition of knowing (perhaps even an epistemology) that makes a difference. They have an irreducible materiality that makes them bodies in terms of which any number of narrative courses can be plotted.

Prior to concluding this section, some additional comment on instruments is warranted. Thus far I have considered them as extensions of bodies, as the means of projecting the body, in an ontogenetic process, into the world. But what of the bodies of instruments themselves? Said states that:

The great master professionals became in fact the living embodiment of their instrument's history, their programmes the narrative of that history presented didactically and integrally. (1991:10)

While Said is referring to performers such as Solti, Berstein, Von Karajan and Toscanini, his statement is equally valid in describing jazz musicians. When a jazz musician picks up an instrument he or she mobilizes the entire tradition which has defined that instrument. Thus, whatever embodied processes one speaks of, it is essential to keep in mind the constraints of history which define the instrument itself. In many representations of jazz, the iconic weight of the instrument gives it an almost autonomous existence, a historically constituted potential that the performer may or may not actualize. The improviser interacts with, has a particular relationship to, the body of the instrument which is caught in a web of the history of previous performances. The relationship often exists as a tension between terror (as in Sonny's performance in the Baldwin story) and eroticism. T R Hummer's 'Poem in the Shape of a Saxophone' dwells on the instrument as an embodiment of the tradition of jazz and on his own biography in relation to it. He describes his relationship with the saxophone as analogous to sexual intimacy, emphasizing the impossible demands that it places on him.

The conflation of the body of the saxophone¹⁶ and a woman's body is common in representations. By extension, the act of playing is often represented as highly erotic, often as a particularly intimate form of interaction between bodies. Yusuf Komunyakaa's poem 'Twilight Seduction' plays off this conflation, at times eliding the distinction between the instrument and a literal lover's body.

because Jimmy Blanton
died at twenty-one
& his hands on the bass

still make me ashamed
to hold you like an upright
& a cross worked into one

embrace.

Later in the poem, instruments are configured as bodies which are objects of seduction.

I tell myself the drum
can never be a woman,
even if her name's whispered

across skin.

The erotic imagery of the poem culminates in a tribute to the sensuality of jazz.

because so much flesh
is left in every song,

¹⁶ In the film *'Round Midnight* (1986) Dexter Gordon mentions the tradition of jazz musicians naming their saxophones after women.

because women touch

themselves to know

where music comes from,

my fingers trace

your lips to open up

the sky & let in

the night.

In conclusion, it is useful to consider two positions on jazz bodies.

[W]e have not yet developed (or retrieved from the past) a discourse that is adequate to jazz in live performance. That is, unless we take ‘discourse’ in its very broadest sense to include the discourse of the body. (Johnson 1993:3.)

It is now possible to maintain a different, more complex image of improvisation as a diverse range of strategies regarding gestural rediscipline and body-object articulation, without a single rallying cry (“Smash the instruments!” “Change the gestures!”). An opposition to the notion of music away from the site of production, a confederation dedicated to the relocation of “music” in and on the surface of the body of the performer – but one that is not unified at the level of the three bodies (knowledge, performer, instrument) nor at the juncture of those bodies, but in the space between improvisers, at the level of what Attali calls “tolerance” and what we might call *paradoxy*....(Corbett 1995:236.)

This chapter has mapped various rhetorical moves into and across bodies in the representation of jazz. It has argued that there is a commitment in jazz literature to locating the music at the site of its production: the body of the improviser located in a specific relation to time (the extreme occasion) and space (in relation to other performers). The

illusion of a unitary, closed body is undermined in many of these representations. So often, the act of creating music is a mattering process through which the body *becomes* in a complex combination of its desires and its search for expression. To return to Merleau-Ponty's notion, this process of becoming is an existential integration: at each point in the unfolding ateleology of identity, each ontological chord change, the mind/body hierarchy is collapsed at the boundaries of the drives and signifying. This, though, is not the only transgression of divisions. Representations of jazz regularly merge the body of the instrument with the body of the performer. The instrument, already inscribed within a history, becomes the way a musician announces a (historically constituted) cultural world and an individual identity. As Johnson suggests, it is to the body's discourses, their intricate configurations, imbedding and shifts, that we need to turn (as creative writers do so often) if we are to develop a language adequate to jazz. The performer's body, as Corbett suggests, is inserted into the ensemble as into a productive confederation. It is the embodied tactics of performers, their playing the changes within themselves and generated among others, which produces music. Also, while this chapter has emphasized ways in which representations of jazz unsettle the divisions of identity, this does not suggest that writers imply homogeneity (the sameness of musicians or a simple unity of Corbett's 'three bodies'). Jazz bodies, like the 'voice' of the performer, are individual, Romantic configurations: they are unique, expressive, aspiring. They are represented as celebrations of difference, as endless challenges to the categories that would reduce being to anything other than something improvised, something always conceived in retrospect, something provisional.

Chapter 3

Mystical Jazz: Romantics, Shamans and Preachers

From 'The Mystic Trumpeter'

1.

Hark, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,
Hovering unseen in the air, vibrates capricious tunes tonight.

I hear thee trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

2.

Come nearer bodiless one, haply in thee resounds
Some dead composer, haply thy pensive life
Was filled with aspirations high, uniform'd ideals,
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,
That now ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy cornet etching,
pealing,
Gives out to no one's ears but mine, but freely gives to mine,
That I may thee translate.

Walt Whitman *Leaves of Grass* (1995:356)

Versions of mysticism are everywhere present in representations of jazz music and its performance. This chapter does not set out to document comprehensively the range of mystical traditions to which writers perform recourse in acts of figuration. Rather, it looks at a selection of configurations of spiritual tropes which recur in representations. Initially it focuses on four areas (although these are interrelated and are comprised of disseminating traces of any number of mystical ideologies): jazz musicians as Romantic heroes, the shamanic performer, the culturally and historically located preacher-prophet, and the extension of the blues 'badman' tradition into jazz literature. In the course of these discussions it considers representations of *jazz itself* as a mystical phenomenon, seeing these as extensions of the performer-functions. The chapter concludes with a review of other traditions invoked in representational practice, essentially to concede its selective emphasis.

This section stands in a particular relation to the chapters which precede it. While the first situated jazz on the side of liberating embodiment and the carnivalesque and the second examined the relation of desire to performance, this chapter considers *transcendence* in representations of jazz. The emphasis here is on overcoming the body (even while using it as a vehicle to achieve its own negation); of moving *beyond* the corporeal to a greater, commonly concealed, reality. In jazz argot, it is about being 'out there'. If it were possible to map the tropic moves, those in this section would be, predominantly, on a vertical axis (upward and downward), while those of the previous chapters have been signally horizontal (across and between subjectivities and bodies). Considering these journeys of transcendence augments, then, the earlier discussion of an embodied overcoming of the narrow confines of individuation. The selection of versions of mysticism in this chapter originates in a predominance of Romantic iconography in discussions and representations of jazz musicians, as well as the constant return to Africanist and African American spiritual roles in depicting jazz performance.

Given this selection, it may seem tangential to dwell on the idea of *the mystical* in any general sense. There are, of course, a plethora of mystical traditions and any

general definition, or even discussion, flounders on either particularity or vague generality. In spite of this, it may be useful, before contemplating the particular mystical domains most commonly mobilized in jazz literature, to consider some concerns in recent discussions of mysticism. In particular, given that I will be considering representations of mystical experiences in literature, it may be productive to look at the relation between mysticism and language.

It appears that recent studies of mystical doctrine advance either a broad or a narrower definition of 'mysticism'. An example of the broad definition is that used by Alston in his analysis of literal and non-literal language in reports of mystical experience:

I will term 'mystical' any experience that is taken by the subject to be a direct awareness of (what is taken to be) Ultimate Reality or (what is taken to be) an object of religious worship. (1992:80)

Alston elides an important debate concerning definitions of 'mysticism'. Many mystical writers, from an array of traditions, distinguish the 'spiritual' from the 'mystical' on the basis that the latter entails the discovery or experience of *undifferentiated unity* of all being. For Alston, this distinction is not definitive. Rather mysticism should be seen, he argues, as an epistemic shift away from analytical cognition to a discovered, but directly experienced knowledge of a spiritual truth or object. The mystical move is then the *means* of understanding, rather than a specific object or 'truth'. The content of the discovery, that which is taken to be "Ultimate Reality", or the particular 'object of [...] worship' are not pertinent in designating experiences as 'mystical'.

The narrower definition suggests that the ultimate reality revealed in the mystical experience is of the interconnectedness of all things, the complete 'oneness' of the universe. In his entry on mysticism for the 1968 *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, De Certeau describes the cognition of universal oneness as an 'oceanic feeling of unity

and belonging' (1992:12). De Certeau derives the term 'oceanic' from the correspondence of Freud and Romain Rollard.¹ After reading his attack on religion, Rollard wrote to Freud stating that Freud did not understand that religious sentiment originated from

a sensation of 'eternity', a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded – as it were, 'oceanic'. (quoted in Storr 1997:95.)

In terms of this narrower notion, a mystical experience is commonly a submergence of differentiated (individuated) identity back into the universe from which it has been wrenched. The categories of being and experience, entrenched by language, prove illusory as the mystic plunges through the veil of signification to become a part of that which exists above, beyond or below the language-riddled 'rag and bone shop' of our reality.

This chapter applies the broader definition, while frequently alluding to the narrower. The discussion, then, hinges on various strains within the exegesis of mysticism and is not confined to a specific version of revealed truth. As De Certeau points out, 'mystical' in Greek means 'hidden' (1992:13), and what is pertinent here are those tropes which configure journeys beyond rationalist discourses of the real to the conventionally occluded 'truths' of being. In the terms of another writer on the relation between music and language, Stephen Phillips, this chapter maps 'spiritually informative' encounters with the hidden (1992:124), those *revelations* of a truth concealed 'behind the diversity of institutions, religions and doctrines' (1992:14) which regulate our perception. The use of 'revelation' is far from incidental. The immediacy of grasping mystical 'truth' is intrinsic to representations of mystical knowledge. Rather than the plodding progress of the rational mind, the mystical moment is regularly epiphanic and the *experience* of truth carries with it a feeling of

¹ This correspondence is also referred to by Anthony Storr (1997:95) in his remarkable book, *Music and the Mind*, in which he discusses the capacity of music to facilitate 'flights from reality' and analyses what such 'flights' may entail.

its own legitimacy. The evanescent presence of an ineffable 'truth' is self-justifying: in this sudden and complete immanence the mystical moment is often reflected as inculcating a sense of 'homecoming', of arrival at a place where one belongs, but which one has hitherto been denied.

How, though, do writers accommodate experiences that are situated beyond the potentials of discourse? And how, more generally, do language and mystical experience relate? The ineffability thesis, and common sense perception of mysticism, is that Ultimate Reality exists outside of language and can, as has been suggested so far, not be encapsulated in its lexicon and grammar. Various mystical traditions present signification (in many instances along with bodily drives) as a barrier to understanding. Language, they hold, is an opaque medium that erects screens between the pilgrim and Ultimate Reality. Meister Eckart's pronouncement typifies this inclination in mysticism: 'If I have spoken of it, I have not spoken, for it is ineffable' (quoted in Katz 1992:3). The mystic's vision pierces through the world crafted by the individuation of semantics and the structures of syntax. Speech is, according to Martin Buber in the introduction to his *Ecstatic Confessions* (1996:xv), 'bound [...] to the *principium individuationis*' and is, therefore, intrinsically incapable of expressing universal unity. Language also anchors our routine perception and is, therefore, the contrary of the epiphanic moment which, by definition, entails stepping beyond the habits of perception and the conventions of understanding. That so much of this doctrine sounds reminiscent of Romanticism is not coincidental and it is to that aesthetic movement (if I can be forgiven the temporary convenience of singularity) that I presently return.

As the important collection of essays *Language and Mysticism* (1992), edited by Steven Katz, demonstrates, though, the ineffability thesis is not the self-evident truth it is often taken to be. The essays which comprise the volume demonstrate that mystical experiences (in accounts from an array of traditions) frequently arise from a transformation of consciousness effected through particular discursive practices. One instance, referred to by Katz in his essay 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning'

(1992), is both emblematic and a useful reference point for my later discussions of code-breaking in improvised musical practice. Katz describes the *Zen koan*, defined by its use of paradox, impossibility and absurdity ('the sound of one hand clapping'), as

the linguistic means whereby language corrects itself; that is, it corrects the errors of propositional and descriptive language that lead men to false ontic commitments, particularly in the Buddhist context in terms of selfhood, the substantiality of things, and the existence of a (or the) One. (1992:6-7)

He goes on to suggest that 'such linguistic ploys'

exist in many places throughout the world, usually connected with the conscious construction of paradoxes whose necessary violation of the laws of logic are intended to shock, even shatter, the standard epistemic security of 'disciples', thereby allowing them to move to new and higher forms of insight/knowledge. (1992:7)

Katz's essay concludes that '[w]hatever else the world's mystics do with language, they do not, as a rule, merely negate it' (1992:33). At the edges of the expressible, code-breaking becomes the necessary condition of knowledge. In order to reach towards an understanding in excess of the conventions of knowing, those conventions need to be subverted, transgressed or attenuated to breaking-point. Apocalyptic insight is regularly represented as entailing a violation of the conventional practices of understanding; as necessitating a new language.² In the course of this chapter I will consider some of the rhetorical devices (*aposiopesis*, *paraleipsis*, *catachresis* and

² The analogies here to Thomas Kuhn's 1970 *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press) are not coincidental. Epiphanic insight is often presented as the collapse of a paradigm of knowing and the initiation of another. Following the epiphany, like the revolutionary moment in knowledge, one has to think in different terms; along lines that could previously not be conceived.

circumlocution) which stage the failure of language and the need for an alternative in representing jazz and its performance.

There is another level on which code-breaking is significant in this analysis. Jazz music is regularly represented in mystical tropes at those moments in its history understood as revolutionary (and in the tradition of jazz historiography, such moments are often embodied *as* Hawkins, Parker, Coltrane, Davis and Coleman). The occasions on which jazz is seen as rupturing the conventions of (musical) expression are often held to necessitate the violation of linguistic conventions in representation. Just as the disruption of linguistic logic (such as that entailed in the *koan*) points to a reality beyond the conventions of expression, so code-breaking music is commonly heard as in excess of the routines of discourse because it heralds a reality which is beyond them. *Since* the musical 'epistemic security' of the listener is shattered in the face of innovation, an 'articulational reaching' (to use Sudnow's phrase in a different context) requires a parallel transgression of the conventions of representation. And, given the centrality of innovation in the popular conception of jazz, it is probably not surprising that these transgressions of historically constituted musical and linguistic logic are so central to jazz literature.

It is not adequate, however, to consider mysticism in representations of jazz in these general terms alone. The versions of mysticism which are mobilized in configuring the music and its performance are most often historically and culturally located. Despite an emphasis on universality in mystical discourse, the traditions alluded to in jazz literature are most often versions of Africanist or African American mysticism with particular political implications and specific resonances among the discourses of cultural identity. According to De Certeau, '[m]ystical language is a social language. [...] For the mystic, to 'prepare a place' for the Other is to prepare a place for others' (1992:20). In approaching the *it*, a version of an ineffable and concealed truth, many tropic journeys delineate histories; they tell stories of culturally located identities in which elided and repressed pasts are recovered. The mystical move in representing jazz should not, therefore, be considered simply the attribution of an ethereal aspect:

it also enacts genealogical claims in its recourse to subcultural and counter-cultural spiritual practices. As will emerge in this analysis, many of these claims can be considered as existing in the *space of the wish* rather than having any empirical (or logical) validity. The wishes they enact are complex and multiple. One such wish is to invest jazz with a sublime dimension, while making it a marker of historically constituted spiritual identity. The truth of this, as with many other mystical qualities attributed to jazz, is open to question. Nevertheless, a selection of those who think about (and in terms of) jazz, who play or listen to it, or who write about it, wish it into spaces in which it thereafter, however tenuously, continues to exist. Since jazz becomes in literary discourse (among other discourses) an alternative order of the world, a difference seen out of the corner of the eye, we need to take such wishes seriously. On one level, the drunk jazz fan, who shouts out requests for an inappropriate standard and fails to listen, does not disprove the possibilities of jazz that others imagine.

Tim Hodgkinson (1996:59), in an article describing his incorporation of Siberian shamanic preparation rituals into his performance practice, distinguishes two ways of conceiving the connections of music and mysticism. An expanded form of his distinction provides a convenient method for approaching the literary representations of those connections in jazz literature. 'In the first, music takes the content of mystical belief as its own' (1996:59). Hodgkinson suggests that, in this mode, 'metaphysical beliefs are encoded into the music in such a way that they have some manifest presence' (1996:59). The example to which he refers is Olivier Messiaen, in whose work, for instance, three major chords in succession stand for the Christian Trinity. In his subsequent discussion, Hodgkinson limits his notion of 'content' to refer to the conceptual schema of mystical doctrines. If we ignore his delimitation, however, the first category of representation could include those in which music manifests the content (rather than the practices or rituals) of a mystical doctrine. These would include, among others, those representations of music as the sound of a universal harmony (in the Pythagorean or Romantic sense), the voice of God (or the gods), the pure language of the soul, or the echo of 'heavenly' sounds.

Hodgkinson's second 'distinct form' of the connection between music and mysticism comprises the 'intervention of mysticism [...] into the productive process as process' (1996:59). He dwells on his use of meditation techniques, derived from Siberian shamanic musical rituals, in preparation for performance. Hodgkinson is concerned, then, in this second instance, with the use of mystical practices as part of the process of performance. His notion is useful in analysing depictions of jazz performances, the ritual (or procedural) aspects of which are regularly described as analogous or equivalent to some version of mystical ritual. For the purposes of my analysis, though, this notion is extended to include the representation of mystical *effects* of musical performance (on both performers and audience members). This extension is more logical than it might appear, since such (imagined) effects are contingent on the performer and audience 'playing' particular roles in the tropic configuration of performances. Representations based in this mode of connection between music and mysticism might include, among others: depictions of musicians as Romantic heroes; those which contrive performance occasions as moments of fundamental unity (of musicians and of performers and the audience); depictions of jazz musicians in the roles of shaman, prophet, seer or priest; or the portrayal of a performance as the genesis of a new world by a deified musician. It is with this second category, in which mysticism is part of the process of music (which in turn has mystical effects), that my analysis of literary texts begins.

Ted Gioia, in a discussion of the decline of the accessibility of jazz, comments on its predominant 'Romantic' aesthetic in order to assert the validity and importance of a contrary, neoclassical tradition embodied by Lester Young, Wes Montgomery, Bill Evans, Count Basie, Stan Getz, John Lewis, Miles Davis, Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond (1988:70-94). Neoclassicism is, in Gioia's opinion, the inclination to temper the 'impulse towards self-indulgence' (1988:84) which he sees as marking the tradition of jazz, a trajectory he maps by considering, among others, the career of John Coltrane. Certainly the transformation in style from Coltrane's subdued, though central, contribution to Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* (1955) is, in terms of moderation and restraint, a world apart from the music that he was producing a decade later at

the *Ascension* session (1965). Gioia describes this change 'as the outgrowth of a temperament which is essentially "romantic"³ in nature' (1988:82). By 'romantic' Gioia means the fixation on 'the act of artistic production; [glorifying] the passing moment of artistic inspiration as a secular epiphany' (1988:82). He suggests, even while conceding that there are as many definitions of Romanticism as there are artists classified as 'Romantic' or scholars seeking clarity on the epistemic shift of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, that the new aesthetic narrowed the gap between the artist and the work. This makes the language of Romanticism particularly prone to recuperation by the discourses of jazz, since, according to Gioia again, jazz 'lives and dies in the moment of performance, and in that moment the musician *is* his music' (1988:83). Jazz improvisation, then, in its immediacy and its dependence on fragile and fleeting inspiration, is a direct reflection of the emotions and feelings of the musician. It is, for this reason, always prone to an emotional excess which can only be constrained, Gioia holds, through a neoclassical transformation into a 'music of balance, of care, of restraint' (1988:85).

Gioia's argument raises many questions. It seems as if jazz languishes endlessly in the manacles of a Romantic critical discourse which reduces the music to sheer expressivity and musicians to artists who, with flashing eyes and floating hair, experience moments of inspiration (often arising outside themselves) over which they have little control and which take a significant psychic toll. Gioia does not, though, counter this characterisation of jazz, but rather suggests the need for an alternative to the Romantic tradition which, he holds, 'seems likely to inflict wounds from which jazz may never recover' (1988:94). He is, thus, not opposing the use of Romantic configurations in describing the trends in jazz improvisational practice. This discussion may seem to be labouring a simple point. Gioia's discussion is interesting, though, in its signal failure to question the validity of the romantic assumptions it inscribes. His attempt at developing aesthetic criteria for evaluating jazz performance

³ Gioia elects to use lower case in naming the movement. This accounts for the shift from lower to upper case in this section of the chapter.

(which culminates in his very useful notion of an 'aesthetic of imperfection' and his commitment to *process*) remains deeply implicated in a Romantic framework it never specifically questions. Such is the tenacious hold of Romanticism on jazz discourse.

This hold is nowhere more apparent than in literary representations of jazz music and performance. Many are, perhaps unsurprisingly, inflected with aspects of Romantic mysticism, as will become progressively clear as this chapter proceeds. At this point, rather than characterize the tendency towards the Romantic in general terms, it may be more productive to select a single instance. James Baldwin's 'Sonny's Blues' (published in 1957, reprinted in Breton 1990:92–130), which was discussed in passing in the previous chapter, is by no means marked by the crass Romantic stereotypes of much jazz literature. Its depiction of Sonny's life and music is, though, comprised of many traces of a pursuit of individual enlightenment, of the exaltation of the Promethean artist (glorying in his capacity to bring enlightenment to the world), of his internalization of the quest for truth, and of the evanescent nature of inspiration and the rigours of creative activity.⁴

At the start of the story, Sonny has been arrested for possession of heroin. His staid brother, a suburbanite and school teacher, contrasts with Sonny's world of bohemian hedonism. This juxtaposition, of a questing outsider with the routine context of his or her past and the settled, mundane world of conventions, is a characteristic structure of much jazz fiction⁵ and a recurrent textual mechanism for staging the Romantic alienation of the jazz musician. Sonny's account of his reasons for using heroin explains that surviving the limit-experience of creative improvisation is contingent on

⁴ All of these are discussed by Harold Bloom as the tenets of versions of European Romanticism. (Bloom, Harold. 1988 *Poetics of Influence*, edited by John Hollander. New Haven: Schwab.)

⁵ It occurs in *Young Man with a Horn* (1938), *Strike the Father Dead* (1962), in much of the fiction of Josef Škvorecký, and is recurrent in Harlem Renaissance, Beat and Lost Generation writing.

momentary narcotic escapes. These escapes are bird-like flights out of the confining labyrinth of an oppressive history and a present marked by deprivation and ennui.

‘It’s not so much to *play*. It’s to *stand* it, to be able to make it at all. On any level.’ He frowned and smiled: ‘In order to keep from shaking to pieces.’
(1990:121)

The Romantic aspect of addiction is regularly stressed in jazz studies, although the stereotype of the suffering, alienated creative genius driven to hallucinogens by the need to transcend the banality of the world, needs to be challenged.⁶ In ‘Sonny’s Blues’ heroin is the protagonist’s method of quietening his anguish at a context marked by deprivation, oppression and pain, as well as facing the responsibility of performing ontogenetic art. Heroin is also, though, a declaration of subcultural allegiance (it is no coincidence that Sonny models himself on Charlie Parker at the outset of his career); in so much jazz literature it stands for the rite of passage into the circle of the adepts, the true converts to the cause. According to Harold Bloom, the

programme of Romanticism [...] demands something more than a natural man to carry it through. Enlarged and more numerous senses are necessary, an enormous virtue of Romantic poetry clearly being that it not only demands such expansion but begins to make it possible, or at least attempts to do so.
(1988:26)

⁶ At the Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium (1998), Pierre Ouellet (York University) delivered a paper, ‘Anguished Jazz: The Phenomenology of Improvised Suffering,’ which subscribed to a distinctly Romantic notion of the alienated, suffering outsider who, faced with the contingencies of improvisation, is almost inevitably dragged into the escape of addiction. Ouellet’s paper advanced a phenomenological connection between improvisation, suffering and substance abuse. This connection, not uncommon in popular renditions of jazz, was lambasted by those jazz scholars present as a perpetuation of the highly detrimental Romantic mythology of jazz.

That hallucinogenic drugs are represented in tropes of mind-*expansion*, as granting the individual access to sensations and images beyond the scope of the *natural* mind, suggests their ready connection to the sensory acuity required of the Romantic artist. In many accounts, heroin functions to accentuate the isolation of the jazz performer, reinforcing a sense of difference from the humdrum and tedium of the unliberated. In the words of Sonny, 'It makes you feel sort of warm and cool at the same time. And distant. And – and sure. [...] It makes you feel – in control. Sometimes you've got to have that feeling' (1990:120).

Sonny's isolation, his private pilgrimage of meaning, exists at the origin of his obsession with jazz. In a narrative turn to an earlier time in his life, prior to his discovery of heroin, Sonny is described playing the piano at his sister-in-law's. The playing becomes more and more intrusive for the family who are hosting Sonny while his brother is away, having been conscripted for military duty.

Isabel finally confessed that it wasn't like living with a person at all, it was like living with sound. And the sound didn't make any sense to her, didn't make any sense to any of them – naturally. They began, in a way, to be afflicted by this presence that was living in their home. It was as though Sonny were some sort of god, or monster. He moved in an atmosphere that wasn't like theirs at all. [...] it was as though he were all wrapped up in some cloud, some fire, some vision all his own; and there wasn't any way to reach him. (1990:114)

Sonny's absorption into his art, his becoming (iconoclastic and contemporary) sound, indicates the extent of devotion demanded by jazz: the artist sacrifices his being on the altar of art, becoming, in the distinctly Romantic process referred to by Gioia, an embodiment of the work itself. This extremity results in an 'otherness' which can be read by Isabel only in terms of deification or as monstrosity (both recurrent motifs in representations of the Romantic artist or his or her work). Resounding at the centre of a cloud, immersed in the fire of his creativity, Sonny is on a visionary internal quest

which places him beyond the province of the human and makes him heroic. Sonny's immersion in music, interestingly, replaces an earlier desire.

Years ago, when he was around fourteen, he'd been all hipped on the idea of going to India. He read books about people sitting on rocks, naked, in all kinds of weather, but mostly bad, naturally, and walking barefoot through hot coals and arriving at wisdom. I used to say that it sounded to me as though they were getting away from wisdom as fast as they could. I think he sort of looked down on me for that. (1990:101)

One form of pilgrimage has given way to another: the idea of a journey in search of the enlightening 'other' has been replaced by traversing consciousness and creativity, of uncovering within the self the possibilities of a Promethean revelation.

The exact nature of the revelation, the object of knowledge which the Romantic subject seeks, regularly remains ineffable. It is commonly expressed in *aposiopesis*, often an indeterminate *it* gestured towards, known by the feelings it evokes, but always just behind the veil exposed by lifting that veil which concealed it.⁷ It is revealing to map, in a passage from 'Sonny's Blues' marked by traces of jazz argot, the changing signification of 'it'.

'Sometimes, you know, and it [1] was actually when I was most *out* of the world, I felt that I was in it [2], that I was with it [3], really, and I could play or I didn't really have to *play*, it [4] just came out of me, it [5] was there. And I don't know how I played, thinking about it [6] now, but I know I did awful things, those times, sometimes, to people. Or it [7] wasn't that I *did* anything to them – it [8] was that they weren't real.' (1990:123)

⁷ 'Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed.' (Shelley, Percy Bysshe. 1973. *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, edited by Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling. London: Oxford University Press: 755.)

In an interesting instance of apocalyptic discourse, the meaning of 'it' shifts from being a pronoun with clear denotation (instances 1 and 2) to something indeterminate in its connotative force. The third use ('with it') carries traces of hipster rhetoric: 'it' is moving into the realm of the subcultural metaphor, implying a qualitative, but unnameable, *value*. By the time we reach the fourth and fifth instances, the word has come to stand for some ineffable truth that Sonny experiences and which enters his playing. This 'it' is innately *present* ('it was there'), as though in a fleeting moment of indisputable immanence. This language of revelation is exceedingly common in configurations of jazz (and is codified in several subcultural expressions). As Sonny's account proceeds, 'it' acquires (progressively) a definite referent. It is as if, in the journey of the word into and back from abstraction, Sonny's language mirrors the process of revelation, maps his spiritual recognition of something mystical beyond the reach of a name.

'Sonny's Blues' concludes with the story's narrator attending a performance of Creole's band in which his brother, Sonny, is playing piano. The stage on which the performance is about to occur is described, as the scene is set, in terms of its sanctity.

The light from the bandstand spilled just a little short of them and, watching them laughing and gesturing and moving about, I had the feeling that they, nevertheless, were being most careful not to step into that circle of light too suddenly: that if they moved into the light too suddenly, without thinking, they would perish in flame. (1990:126)

The order of being inside the circle is distinct from that without: to enter requires preparation, readiness. The stage is a site of potential ritual enlightenment and it will not tolerate defilement by a maladroit performer or one who does not respect the weighty responsibility of playing jazz.

Just before Sonny begins to play, the narrator creates a sense of portent by meditating on the *creative* act of the musician, the *genesis* of a world which occurs in performance.

All I know about music is that not many people ever really hear it. And even then, on rare occasions when something opens up within, and the music enters, what we mainly hear, or hear corroborated, are personal, private, vanishing evocations. But the man who creates the music is hearing something else, is dealing with the roar rising from the void and imposing order on it as it hits the air. What is evoked in him, then, is of another order, more terrible because it has no words, and triumphant, too, for that same reason. And his triumph, when he triumphs, is ours. (1990:127)

Imposing order on noise is a tropic arrogation of godlike power. The jazz musician is here, quite typically, seen as a Romantic consciousness that, to use Abrams's distinction, is 'a lamp projecting light' (1953:60) rather than inert and simply receptive. In the narrator's configuration, he or she originates meaning by structuring 'the roar rising from the void', by compelling the sheer facticity of noise into form. This reiterates the original separation, enacted in the Creation, between chaos and order. The reverence which is this power's due (not far from Coleridge's 'holy dread'⁸ in many representations of jazz musicians) arises because the creative force emanates *from* the creator: on the verge of blasphemy, the musician does not simply announce, but makes, a new world in, to paraphrase Harold Bloom, a thoroughly internalized Prometheanism.

⁸ The reverence enacted in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* (in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*: 256–7) – Beware! Beware!/His flashing eyes, his floating hair!/Weave a circle round him thrice,/And close your eyes with holy dread,/For he on honey-dew hath fed,/And drunk the milk of Paradise – is paralleled in Bishop Ramakrishna King Haqq's *One Mind Temple Evolutionary Church of Christ* in which Coltrane is described as 'the will of God [...] the incarnation of truth', bread adorned with his picture is broken and called 'our daily bread' and an image of Coltrane is worn on shirts 'like a prayer cloth'. (Haqq quoted in Gioia 1988:81.)

The immediacy of jazz improvisation, its seeming dependence on inspiration, leads to its configuration in terms not dissimilar from the Aeolian harp trope in Romantic verse. Just as the Romantic poet is a distinct combination of Promethean power and the passivity of an instrument dependent on the vagaries of the wind, so the jazz musician is represented as capable of ontogenetic art yet vulnerable (perhaps *because* of what is at stake) to the failure of inspiration in an instant. There are many renditions of this failure and the consequent silencing of an instrument (it means a lot to hang up your horn). The narrator of 'Sonny's Blues' describes the anguished relation between a performer and his means of creation.

I had never before thought how awful the relationship must be between a musician and his instrument. He has to fill it, this instrument, with the breath of life, his own. He has to make it do what he wants it to do. And a piano is just a piano. It's made out of so much wood and wires and little hammers and big ones, and ivory. (1990:127-8)

Breathing life into the instrument (and there are any number of variations on the mystical nature of breath) is a version the wind-harp trope. Only the breath of the musician will transform the instrument's materiality into *creativity* and that breath is not to be relied upon, entailing as it does both (existential and/or spiritual) labour and faith in the possibility and validity of creation. Playing music, if we conceive of it in Romantic terms, is a limit-experience of implication in the merging of the body of the performer with the body of the instrument. Identity, as was discussed with respect to many representations, is on the line as breath flows across reeds, through mouthpieces, or as fingers strike keys, pluck strings. This radical imbrication of artist and instrument, this tangibility of selfhood at the micro-modalities of musical production, might be the origin of the recourse to the languages of mysticism. Worlds and selves are being created, are on the line, and, within the Romantic configuration of the artist, the most elevated language alone seems to suffice to describe these processes.

It is clear that Sonny's quest, while wholly individual and self-implicating, is not isolated. He is guided by Creole, the band leader, who 'wanted Sonny to leave the shoreline and strike out for deep water,' who 'was Sonny's witness that deep water and drowning were not the same thing' (1990:127). Perhaps even more significantly, the culmination of the story is that Sonny's Blues (the tune the performance becomes in retrospect) speaks to, of and for his community, specifically about their history of suffering.

[Creole] and his boys up there were keeping it new, at the risk of ruin, destruction, madness, and death, in order to find new ways to make us listen. For, while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we have in all this darkness. (1990:129)

The internalized quest has revealed a communal genealogy; the existential searching has created the sound of a shared history. This shift, from a version of solitary quest to social significance, is common in representations of jazz and much of the remainder of the chapter concerns that movement. Aspects of the shift are regularly explained with reference to Africanist or African American versions of mysticism, and it is not surprising that the description of Sonny's performance should conclude with a scene of reciprocity and commonality marked by traces of African American religious worship.

Then they all gathered around Sonny and Sonny played. Every now and again one of them seemed to say, amen. Sonny's fingers filled the air with life, his life. But that life contained so many others. And Sonny went all the way back, he really began with the spare, flat statement of the opening phrase of the song. Then he began to make it his. [...] I seemed to hear with what burning he made it his, with what burning we had yet to make it ours, how we could cease lamenting. Freedom lurked around us and I understood, at last, that he could

help us to be free if we would listen, that he would never be free until we did.
(1990:129)

Sonny's agonized quest at the edges of expressivity leads him back to his community and its past. His homecoming, though, seems momentary and fragile. Sonny's freedom, his escape from the agony of knowing, can only be effected by the conversion of those who listen to a vision of freedom.

Sonny's shift from solitary pilgrim to guide and chronicler recurs in many representations of jazz musicians and, I believe, typifies an important strand in literary jazz. In the 'six revisionary ratios'⁹ (1988:101-4) through which he conceptualizes poetic influence, Harold Bloom includes *askesis*:

a moment of self-purgation which intends the attainment of a state of solitude; I take the term, general as it is, particularly from the practice of pre-Socratic shamans like Empedocles. The later poet does not, as in *kenosis*, undergo a revisionary movement of emptying, but of curtailing; he yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor.... (1988:102)

This particular relation to the past, this moment of severance from tradition (and community) only to return as innovator, is a useful map for conceiving of those depictions of jazz musicians in the multiple roles of the shaman. Sonny experiences *askesis* in venturing 'away' and returning to guide to freedom his brothers and sisters. His, though, is one of many such journeys which organize jazz texts through the tropes of the mystical traditions of shamanism. Ranging beyond Romanticism (in which, as Bloom shows, the artist is often considered in shamanic terms), this study

⁹ While beyond the scope of this study, all six 'ratios' are suggestive for conceptualizing the notions of influence and innovation in jazz history. Using each in musicological analyses might well provide a useful basis for conceiving of the relation of individuals to the traditions of which they are a part or which they counter.

turns briefly to ethnomusicology and anthropology to formulate a conceptual scheme which might function as the terms of an analysis.

Hodgkinson, on whose work I have based the structure of this analysis, quotes a shaman from the Republic of Tuva in Siberia.

A composer can't do it; when you're overwhelmed with these feelings, a melody, or rhythm appears, to help you perform this feeling. There are no rules; it's in the nature of the person himself. And not an ordinary person; a shaman is not an ordinary person. The ritual depends for its form on the person who developed it. (1996:63)

While there are varieties of shamanic practice, studies have sought commonalities and it is these (while being reductive and inadequate to any specific tradition) that concern us here. The shaman performs an act of intercession: he (or she¹⁰) translates, through chanting, dance, drumming or other forms of musical performance, a force that exists outside of himself, into the human realm. The forms of musical expression he adopts are contingent on the textures of his 'encounters' with the spirits and the situation in which they are, as a consequence of the shaman's invocation, intervening. The 'music,' *which one cannot separate from the context of its emergence*, is reactive: it arises out of particular circumstances (practical and spiritual) and the specific emotions they evoke. The music cannot be pre-meditated; it has to be improvised along the lines of the 'feelings' of the shaman; it has to embody the energies experienced in the course of the shaman's flight into the spiritual reality and his return to his earthly context. The Siberian shaman is adamant: the practice depends on the person; it is fundamentally located.

¹⁰ In most contexts the role of shaman is predominantly, if not exclusively, male, although many contemporary performers of shamanic music are women. I use the male pronoun in this section following the example of the literature to which I refer.

Michael Tucker, in his research into the shamanic spirit in twentieth century music, notes that shamans are often referred to as 'wounded healers' (1996:70). Their healing function is a concern of much research into shamanic practices and there have been several attempts to devise a conceptual framework to explain shamanic therapeutic practices (many are concerned with the similarities and differences between shamanism and contemporary psychotherapy¹¹). Eliade's pathfinding explanation of shamanic practices remains a standard reference point in discussions. According to her, there is a close connection between the myth of healing, the cosmogonic myth and the myth of the origin of the sickness and its remedy. In the act of healing, the shaman implores God (or the gods) to create the world anew free of the illness afflicting the individual: 'the Creator is asked to come down again for a new creation of the World, for the patient's benefit' (Eliade 1963:29). The shaman reiterates the creation myth itself through confronting the first entry of disease into the world and the first gifts of healing, both of which are standard elements of the therapeutic narrative sung by the shaman (and inner reference points in his spiritual journey). The particular ritual of healing becomes, then, an affirmation of the whole of Creation in situating the shaman and his 'patient' in a grand narrative which links the spiritual to the corporeal and emotional aspects of being. But the shaman's rendition of the cosmogonic myth also regularly entails reciting his genealogical lineage and that of the afflicted individual. Apart from a universal locatedness, then, the ritual healing situates both shaman and patient socially and historically: both individuals are conceived as momentary presences in far larger narratives of identity, illness and healing and the shaman mediates constantly the relationship between the individual's well-being and that of his or her society.

The healing function of the shaman is often accompanied by the idea of his being 'wounded'. It is as if the *askesis* is a tribulation the consequences of which are commonly significant damage. The 'woundedness' of the shaman is discussed by

¹¹See Eliade (1963), Tucker (1996) and Hodgkinson's (1996) analyses, all of which evidence aspects of Jungian analysis.

Tucker (1996:70) and several of Eliade's (1963) accounts of particular shamanic practices mention that the shaman undergoes trials and painful initiation rites, both of which leave him permanently 'wounded'.¹² It is these wounds, or more particularly the journeys on which they are sustained, which confer on the shaman his status as healer. His is an understanding and capacity born of suffering. Rather than suffering vanquished, though, it is suffering retained and re-experienced in each journey of healing. In their wounding rite of passage, shamans discover 'deeper, soul-strengthening energies underneath the many vicissitudes of existence' (Tucker 1996:70) and it is these which they can usher into the world to do the work of healing and recovery. The wounding of the shaman is, in many versions, a form of sacrificial 'death' of his 'socially conditioned self' (Tucker 1996: 70), followed by his rebirth as a '[g]uardian of the animistic universe' (1996:71). In confronting his own mortality in this form, the shaman becomes intensely aware of the human condition and the vagaries of fate.

Bruce Chatwin (1987:215) mentions, in his account of the originary musical mapping by the aboriginal ancestors, that *travail* and *travel* come from the same root, and that journeys in most nomadic cultures are represented in tropes of inevitable suffering. The shaman's initiatory and subsequent journeys are particular instances of suffering. The tropes of movement, of travel/travail, clearly spatialize the process of becoming *through* suffering and of learning to heal. Change is the persistent loss of balance which, controlled, amounts to walking. It is a succession of such changes for which the journey comes to stand in characterizations of shamanic rituals. As I will show later, the shaman's movement is a useful emblem for conceiving of patterns in the representations of jazz, which is so tied to notions of suffering, healing and, quite centrally, to the idea of journeying. Several similarities between the shamanic myths and the ways in which jazz is conceived will emerge, but what underlies them all is

¹² These wounds are reiterated and recalled, in the course of rituals, by the shaman bleeding from the nose. Images of the shaman thus bleeding occur in cultures as diverse as several Native American and in the rock paintings of the San, Khoikhoi and !Xung of the Kalahari.

this notion of movement, that, to return to Sudnow's formulation 'jazz music *is* ways of moving from place to place' (1993:146), of demarcating spaces and progressing through them.

The shaman, then, is a bridge to the ineffable. He (perhaps we could use the word 'literally') sings, plays or drums the *it* into the world. The shaman summons and welcomes the spirits among humankind by improvising music, movement, and words, and allows them to justify themselves through the consequences of their intervention. He sings us back, anthropologists such as Eliade assert, to ourselves and back to life, by guiding us back to our origins. The power to do so is, though, not his own. His is not a victory of selfhood, but, like most forms of mysticism, a complex balance between self-actualization and self-abnegation. The shaman achieves his identity in the act of invocation, but once again, repeating his first death, ceases to exist in an individuated form. Returning to Shelley's notion, his journey *is* an (dis)embodiment of the 'apocalyptic narrative': veils of the familiar and the routine are lifted as the shaman approaches the *it*, the essential, defining origin of our humanity. It is this return which, seemingly paradoxically, allows us to 'know the world *anew*' (Tucker 1996:73).

Tucker (1996) suggests, through compelling if brief comments, a direct incursion of the shamanic spirit into twentieth century music. His analyses track aspects of musical primitivism from traditional origins into contemporary serious music (Stockhausen, Messiaen, Partch, Glass, Pärt and Reich), into the current wave of 'world music' (Mari Boine, Robby Robertson, Sainkho Namtchylak, Shu-De, Nils Aslak Valkeapaa and Nana Vasconcelos) and into contemporary jazz (particularly Jan Garbarek, but also Don Cherry, Jim Pepper, Ornette Coleman and George Russell). These generic divisions are, of course, rather arbitrary given the extensive degree of cross-seeding between musical styles and the fluidity (almost compulsive migrancy) of improvisational practices. I am, in this analysis, less concerned with a direct genealogy: that traditional shamanic music has been incorporated into contemporary jazz and that this 'reality' is then represented in literature. Asserting a direct descent

of contemporary music from traditional practices is often doubtful,¹³ existing more in the space of longing, of the wish for a particular heritage of identity (and the theorist or creative writer in asserting origins enacts a distinctly shamanic role). This tendency will be discussed later in an analysis of Samuel A. Floyd's *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* (1995). For the time being, the figure and practices of the shaman stand for a tropic configuration in human understanding and representation. While avoiding the Jungian notion of archetype, the *idea* of the shamanic journey, of the inseparability of individual and social well being, and of the connection between woundedness and wisdom, recurs in the configuration of any number of social phenomena, one of them being the representation of jazz.

Reviewing *Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker*, a collection of anecdotes about Parker, Ralph Ellison characterizes the post-war jazznik's perception of Parker: '[he] was Bird, a suffering, psychically wounded, law-breaking, life-affirming hero' (1995:228).

[W]hen we read through the gossip of the accounts we recognize the presence of a modern American version of the ancient myth of the birth and death of the hero. We are told of his birth, his early discovery of his vocation, his dedication to his art, of his wanderings and early defeats; we are told of his initiation into the mysteries revealed by his drug and the regions of terror to which it conveyed him, we are told of his obsessive identification with his art and his moment of revelation and metamorphosis. (1995:229)

¹³ Claiming a direct descent of the jazz musician from traditional African shamans is tempting and common (both in studies and by musicians themselves). The genealogy relies on the persistence of practices (usually Yoruban and Ibo) from Africa, via Congo Square and African American Christian worship into jazz performance. I avoid the question as to whether or not this claim is verifiable, since the claim has effects in the world which are, in terms of identity and history, indisputable.

Following this moment, Parker 'reigns as a recognized master, creating, recording, inspiring others, finding fame, beginning a family' (1995:229). It is apparent that, beyond the conventional elements of the heroic narrative, Parker's journey of becoming is a transformation of his interiority *through* his wounding. The solitary wanderer in the desert of identity suffers and, through that suffering, learns to inspire others to the heights he has reached. Ellison's review advances (although with irony) the same narrative of Parker's life as Ross Russell's adulatory biography, *Bird Lives* (1994): one of spiritual enlightenment through hardship, culminating in gifting that understanding to those willing to listen. The heroic narrative, this journey through suffering to enlightenment and the capacity to guide, is inflected throughout with ideas of *spiritual* understanding and teaching. Parker can heal those who know how to listen because he has confronted wounding, can speak of those wounds, but can also speak of transcending them. His performances, these narratives would have it, express the woundedness (even reiterate it) while also guiding the sublime into the world. In a distinctly Romantic move, Parker is the shaman who expresses simultaneously the fragility and godlike capacity of humankind. This expression, this teaching, is born of an internal, wounding quest and the legitimacy of its capacity to guide and heal emerges from Parker's suffering.

Ellison's description (and Russell's uncritical embrace) of the 'modern American version of [an] ancient myth' speaks to many jazz biographical narratives. The 'life in jazz' story is so regularly one of struggle, suffering, alienation, conversion, gradual, then epiphanic enlightenment, rebellion in the face of the 'fathers', incorporation of the tradition and, finally, acquiring the capacity to lead others to discovery (usually just prior to being elevated into the pantheon of those who live always in the traces of their music in the performances of others). This grand narrative of the jazz performer's identity is invidious: it seeps into so many literary accounts of jazz and jazz musicians' lives that it always runs the risk of a dull repetition of the stereotype.

One of the finest examples of fictional jazz biography which adheres to this mythological pattern is John Clellon Holmes's, *The Horn* (1958, current edition

1990). As mentioned in the previous chapter, novel tells of the last days in Pool's life as he wanders, emotionally disoriented, musically superseded and all but socially isolated, in search of traces of his life as it was. A description of the veneration of Edgar Pool by his band members warrants quotation at length.

For the foundation of their admiration for him above any other jazzman of his time had always been that Edgar, years before others, had been a skilled, devoted servant of his horn; an adept in the complexities of harmony and rhythm of which it was capable; able to comprehend and even transcribe its magic in an abstruse notation that preserved it; willing to risk himself in the tenuous, hairbreadth rapport of improvisation so that the unnamable truth of music (which all can hear and no one can explain) might happen; as faithful to the horn as if it was, itself, the holy vessel of American song. [...] He knew the secrets coveted and striven after and lusted for by Wing's generation, and knew them the only way a man can know such things; having coveted and striven after them himself, and what is more, having done all of this alone, for the most part unaided by the music or the musicians of his time.... (1990:36-7)

Pool's is a life dedicated to learning a new language in a complete supplication to the capacities of his instrument. He is a solitary disciple of new musical ideas who places his identity on trial as he forges a new language of that identity and for the community for whom he performs. He fights to grasp and manifest the ineffable 'truth of music' so that a tradition of truth-telling might sustain the 'one continuing song' (1958:243) which is the tradition of jazz music.¹⁴ Pool's immersion is dangerous: the truth requires a persistently new mode of expression and, for a vision to be shared, audiences (and fellow musicians) have to grant that the new language has meaning. The new is at the mercy of old criteria. Unless listeners are prepared to make the epistemic shift to the new, they will not ascribe to the performer the role of

¹⁴ Bloom (1988:77) points out that 'Shelley speculated that poets of all ages contributed to one Great Poem perpetually in process.' This notion, of a seeming continuity and organic wholeness, is common in representations of the jazz tradition.

seer and guide. The lag between a musician's insight and an audience's understanding, the belated acknowledgement of genius, is a recurrent aspect of jazz narratives which commonly make a fetish of being 'ahead of one's time'. If the audience is not yet 'ready to hear', they may invoke old criteria and deduce that the new is *error*, that the musician is, Icarus-like, flying too high for his or her own good. The Icarus image is distinctly apposite: as was discussed earlier, jazz musicians, for all the Modernism of their method, are frequently configured as Romantic figures, tearing aside veils of illusion to give to man the one truth which will always exist beyond any attempt to explain it. It can be heard: it cannot be spoken. It has to be fought for and it can only be written (the instance of graphocentrism in the extract above is not uncommon in jazz literature) if a new form of writing can be devised. Icarus only becomes the Recording Angel in a wholly new mode, only by speaking a different language.

The representation of Pool's solitary journey to musical enlightenment is typical of literary renditions of jazz biographies. The tropic equivalence to the journeys of shamans is compelling. In the Taoist tradition, for example, the upper reaches of mountains are the abode of the Immortals and

[o]nly the true adepts of Tao, solitary shamans, could climb or descend the peaks, and then only in the mystical trance that came from exercises of ascetic self-abnegation. (Schama 1996:407-8.)

The jazz musician, like the shaman, is on the cusp of the ineffable truth: he is the one mortal who can navigate a course beyond the human and mortal into the realm of the spirits and the Ultimate Reality and can return to share, if not the vision, then at least the understanding born of that vision. To be ready for his passage, the shaman has to demonstrate complete dedication and selflessness and has to be prepared to enter unexplored recesses of the mind and soul. So, too, the jazz musician has to embody obsessive dedication, a commitment to solitary learning (hours of woodshedding as though on a mountain retreat) and a willingness to step outside of his societal self. For

all the alienation it will induce, the jazz musician has to step beyond the ordinary provinces of the domestic, the accepted and the purely conscious control of his creativity. The musician has to hand himself over to jazz just as the shaman has to hand himself over to a power beyond himself.

Fatisha's poem, 'From Star to Sun We Are Going' (in Feinstein and Komunyakaa 1991:57), is one of many poetic maps of a jazz musician's journey (it is dedicated to Miles Davis) to the source of enlightenment and then back to humankind to guide and heal. Here is the first stanza of that poem:

The out-sane men have walked
already on the face of God &
felt color/they have been
intrinsic placements who blew
through their navels & curved
life's usage to fit the dreams
of perpetual stokers . . .
they stilled the river so
the faithless could cross

The epiphanic 'encounter', the past experience which has awakened the musician to the potentials of his art, is a conventional element in the narrative of the evolution of the enlightened jazz musician. Having come closer to a source of truth, having 'walked/already on the face of God', the musician is reborn as enlightened and can guide others, or at least ease their passage, towards the source of truth or out of exile.

The epiphany, as often as not, entails an encounter with a musical guru, someone who deranges the musical senses of a fully implicated listener, someone who performs a *new* chorus in the eternal song of truth (to paraphrase the conclusion of *The Horn*). Here is a description of Wing, Edgar Pool's heir and successor, who outplays him in a cutting contest which is Pool's final (and failed) trial:

...in Junius Priest's shuttered apartment, he sat with his hat down over alert, emotionless eyes and blew strange through the afternoons. They knew that he had once heard the big, plumed Bird, who sings somewhere in the centre of America – a wild, harsh eagle song – and still sometimes heard it, even in the modest jump of their little band of lazy cynics: and soloing on some copybook riff, played clear, original things, and sometimes experienced a thin pleasure in it. (1990:34–5)

The trance-like state of Wing as he recalls and relives the gift of inspiration received at the feet of Charlie Parker, recalls the shaman who is separated by his greater understanding, who can climb to the heights of the Immortals even while the journey can be barely understood by those around him. He is isolated by and within insight: having witnessed and experienced a mode of transcendence he is compelled to master it, to seek it everywhere and to hear it whenever even traces of it emerge in the mundane. Thus, the initial rupture, hearing the 'wild, harsh eagle song,' is reiterated in every performance: the musician, like the shaman, always manifests the cause of his difference.

Recalling sacred Native-American totems, Holmes adds the eagle to the ornithological catalogue suggested by Ellison in his riff on Parker's nickname. Ellison, in his playful meditation, proposes, firstly, that the goldfinch may be an apposite referent for *Bird* since, '[i]n more worldly late-Renaissance art, the little bird became the ambiguous symbol of death and the soul's immortality' (1995:222-3). He rejects the goldfinch because it sings like a canary, 'which, soul or no soul, rules the goldfinch out' (1995:223). His second option is the mockingbird because Parker's

playing was characterized by velocity, by long-continued successions of notes and phrases, by swoops, bleats, echoes, rapidly repeated bebops – I mean rebopped bebops – by mocking mimicry of other jazzmen's styles, and by interpolations of motifs from extraneous melodies, all of which added up to a dazzling display of wit, satire, burlesque and pathos. (1995:223)

Continuing the tradition of ornithological analogies, in Clint Eastwood's *Bird* (1989), Parker's death is, in an awfully clichéd moment, marked by the upward flight of a white dove (in slow motion). In *The Horn*, yet another bird is invoked:

[Pool] held his tenor saxophone almost horizontally extended from his mouth. This unusual posture gave it the look of a metallic albatross caught insecurely in his two hands, struggling to resume flight. In those early days he never brought it down to earth.... (1990:8)

The preponderance of images of birds in representing jazz musicians and performances is a significant tropic attribution of mystical qualities to the music and its makers. In his analysis of shamanic elements in contemporary music, Tucker notes that the shaman's

magical means give life wings, singing it through the pain and confusion of existence into the glory of being. As Mircea Eliade, the late doyen of shamanic studies this century once pointed out, 'the German word for magical formula is *galdr*, derived from the verb *galan*, "to sing", a term applied especially to bird calls'. (1996:70)

Avian imagery achieves the tropic conflation of singing (or musicality) and of transcendent journeys. Not only does the bird fly above the mundane and routine, it also sings its place and being; it situates itself in the world and announces its identity in song. Birdsong is so traditionally the sound of aspiration, of the soul's flight upwards towards an ethereal truth, that it is hardly surprising that it should exist so dominantly in the tropic reservoir of literary jazz. Many representations of shamanic journeys are based on the flight of the bird, and birdcalls are regularly announcements of spiritual ascent. Images of birds come to stand for an analogous vertical transcendence by the musician (who, like, the shaman sings, drums, plays or dances his way out of this world) as he ventures into a realm beyond the reach of the earthbound and ordinary. The flight sets him or her apart from the humdrum of this

world, just as the flight of the shaman's spirit causes the death of the socialized, conventional self (the *here*) and liberation into his heightened identity (the *there*). The onus, though, of the capacity to venture beyond the ordinary suggests that the gift, if thwarted, can be transformed into sheer weight: the bird in glorious flight can become, as it does for Pool, the weight of the albatross.

The obvious phoenix associations of the title of Ross Russell's biography of Parker should be noted. 'Within a few days of Parker's death there appeared among the graffiti on walls in the Village and in subways, scrawled in black crayon or squirted out of pressurized paint canisters, the legend "BIRD LIVES!"' (Russell 1973:363). This abiding presence of Bird's spirit, its persistence after his death, is distinctly mystical despite the seemingly mundane graffiti. Christopher Gilbert's poem 'Horizontal Cosmology' (in Feinstein and Komunyakaa 1991:64-5) is a wonderful literary evocation of the abiding presence of Parker and employs directly shamanic imagery in representing the musician's capacity to link the past and present, to act as a conduit by means of which the spirits of the dead can take their place in this world. Here is the whole of the first stanza of the fourth section and the first four lines of the second.

4. *Saxophone*

My bell is Charlie Parker's
hatband. So few of you who
come to touch me understand
my feeling,
only this black voice.
I am a temple and he comes
to speak through me. I am the dream
lip because
I say what you're afraid of

facing, *Living is intense*.

I am bad from note to note
like god's nostril, I connect
living to what lies ahead
by breath.

The mystical and shamanic tropes are obvious: the images of possession, the musician as the vehicle for a truth which exists beyond himself, and an image of his lineage which casts it as analogous to a shamanic inheritance (as existing in a continuous tradition of seers and healers). The speaker, in the image of being 'god's nostril' (perhaps one of poetry's stranger similes) suggests that he is a conduit for a breath of life, something through which an essential truth, once breathed by Parker, passes. Breathing onto the clay of our context he is life-giving and life-affirming. He reiterates our creation, that originating breath of God, and, in linking us to the past (the dead here do arise), also links us to the future.

A poem organized around a catalogue of shamanic figures and icons is Quincy Troupe's 'For and More; for Miles Davis' (in Feinstein and Komunyakaa 1993:276-9). Troupe, who assisted Miles Davis in the composition of his autobiography, describes him in the following terms:

blues man holding the sun between his teeth

soothsayer of chewed-up moments
shekereman at the crossroads of cardinal points
talisman hanging from dewdrops singing deep
sea diver of transparent rhythmic poems
trumpet voice walking on eggshells
your shadow is as the river snake-thin
man at flood-time blood lengthening in the veins

coursing through the earth's flesh

shaman man gone beyond the sky's limit

Later in the poem, Troupe refers to Davis as 'juju hoodoosman conjuring illuminating darkness' (1993:279). Situating Miles Davis in terms of (admittedly essentialised) African mystical practices, and placing him at the centre of a universal cosmology and natural world, entails an alternative notion of spiritual enlightenment. Davis is seen as a hero of African American identity in embodying the ancient roles of African shamans, while participating in the nature-worship associated (albeit stereotypically) with this continent. Davis, largely through his disdain of predominantly white audiences and strong statements about the racism of the United States,¹⁵ became a hero of black consciousness and a pioneer of the celebration of the 'blackness' and African heritage of jazz. The use of traditional West African ceremonies and images as sources of tropes in the representation of jazz is part of the process of reclaiming the marginalized histories of the African Americans: a shamanic re-telling of the stories of origin so that new, less racist cosmogonic myths can be recovered and perpetuated. In literary representations of the shamanic jazz musician, the differences between mythologies are, at times, elided. Native American shamans blur into African priests who blur into revivalist preachers and the practitioners of voodoo(hoodoo)/juju in the American South. Such blurring is not simply tropic clumsiness: it is, at times, an assertion of forms of cultural continuity and of alternative historiographies (and hagiographies) that ally the practices of marginalized minorities in a gesture of resistance against hegemonic epistemologies rooted in

¹⁵ America is such a racist place, so racist it's pitiful. It's just like South Africa only more sanitized today; it's not as out in front in its racism. Other than that it's just the same thing. But I have always had a built-in thing for racism. I can smell it. I can feel it behind me, anywhere it is. And the way I am, a lot of whites really get mad with me, especially white men. They even get madder when I tell them off when they get out of line. They just think they can do any kind of shit to a black person here...I think the schools should teach kids about jazz or black music. Kid's should know that America's only original cultural contribution is the music our black forbears brought from Africa which was changed and developed here. (Davis, Miles (with Quincy Troupe). 1989. *Miles: The Autobiography*. London: Picador: 395.)

cultural dominance. This issue will be discussed at greater length later when this analysis turns to the tropes of the ring and call-and-response in literary representations of jazz music.

Instances of shamanic healing can, thus, be highly politicized and it is to an analysis of another, more overtly militant instance, that I now turn. Prior, though, to looking at Amiri Baraka's AM/TRAK, it is useful to question the role of the expletive in literary discourse. In her analysis of the Celinian lexicon, Julia Kristeva describes his use of obscene words as a '*desemanticization* function analogous to the fragmentation by rhythm' (Kristeva 1980:143). For her, then, Celine marks those places in his texts where 'the signifying subject [...] is exceeded by a conflict of instinctual drives' (1980:143) with obscenities. The semiotic irrupts while resisting translation into the symbolic, and the obscenity comes to stand for a thwarted desire to name that which exists both before and outside of language. According to Kristeva, the obscene word does, though, mobilize the signifying capacity of the subject in allowing him or her to move through the 'membrane of [semantic] meaning' (1980:143) to a gestural marking of the drives themselves. Kristeva rejects any transcendental status for the obscenity, anchoring it firmly within bodily drives.

Amiri Baraka's 'AM/TRAK' (in Feinstein and Komunyakaa 1991:2-7) typifies, at moments, a discursive move into obscenity which is not uncommon in portraying jazz in discourse. On one level, the use of expletives is simply a manifestation of subcultural (usually African American) slang. What concerns me here, though, are the other levels on which this *desemanticization* functions.

But Trane clawed at the limits of cool
slandered sanity
with his trying to be born
raging
shit

It is possible to suggest a notion somewhat different to Kristeva's to characterize the use of obscenity in instances such as the Baraka poem. Baraka, as signifying subject, chooses the signifier 'shit' because it is a linguistic marker of the inexpressible, the ineffable. The word does carry with it the intensity of an irruption of the drives: it marks a rupture within and failure of the symbolic in its resignation to the inadequacy of the expressive potential of naming. 'Shit' is an empty signifier; it has no objective referent in uses such as Baraka's. Rather it stands for a discursive gap which can only be surrounded by adjectival predication. The refusal to name that for which the obscenity stands is another instance of *apostrophe*: 'shit' marks Coltrane's performance as in excess of any attempt to name it. It functions as a hint at an idea 'too awesome to be put into words' (*The Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 1965:41). Turning away from Kristeva's embodiment in poetic language for a moment, the expletive could be held to be a marker of experienced transcendence. This is not, of course to suggest that the expletive is a transcendental signifier in the Derridean sense. Rather than signifying the organizational centre of a particular discursive configuration, it marks the edges of the expressible, often constituting the ineffable centre of a text as an inevitable absence. For Freud, the transcendental gesture arises in the space of thwarted desire. There are interesting correspondences between that hypothesis, the *desemanticization* in the use of expletives, and the apocalyptic (unveiling) structure of jazz narratives.

Later in 'AM/TRAK', Baraka goes onto describe Coltrane's playing as

Street gospel intellectual mystical survival codes

Intellectual street gospel funk modes...

Coltrane is the spiritual healer of the community in that he provides African Americans with *their own* means of survival. He preaches in a language which is of

the 'street'¹⁶ and which indicates those intellectual and spiritual possibilities which emerge from it. His is a music of cultural and spiritual affirmation and his gift to his community is their historical legacy returned as a subversive assertion of identity in the face of oppression. Coltrane, shaman-like, is the spiritual leader who cries, not only for a mystical liberation of the individual, but for a communal liberation from oppression:

black blower of the now

The vectors from all sources - slavery, renaissance

bop charlie parker,

nigger absolute super-sane screams against reality

course through him

AS SOUND!

"Yes, it says

this is now in your screaming

recognize the truth

recognize reality...

Two versions of the 'real' operate in Baraka's poem. The first is the harsh oppressive reality of racist America while the second can be equated with a *real* knowledge (as opposed to false consciousness) that emerges from a combination of heightened political and spiritual awareness. Coltrane is, like an Old Testament prophet, capable of leading individuals and an entire culture out of the desert of false consciousness into the light of truth. His cries are against the material universe and the history of exploitation of African Americans. They are tears in the veils that conceal the Ultimate Reality or *it* from us, showing us the real beyond the material. But the tears are also in the social fabric woven of oppressive and demeaning practices. Thus it is that Coltrane is represented as a guide leading the African American community from

¹⁶ It would be interesting to explore the use of 'the street' as a contemporary version of 'the folk'. There are interesting correspondences in representations and informative differences in political connotation.

one version of the 'real' to another. Coltrane is a shamanic figure in Baraka's poem: he is a conduit of knowledge and awareness that can heal and then affirm the healed identity of his people.

Baraka's poem ends with a direct statement of the healing message which is the legacy of Coltrane.

And yet last night I played *Meditations*

& and it told me what to do

Live, you crazy mother

fucker!

Live!

&organize

yr shit

as rightly

burning.

The final affirmation in Baraka's poem is both of a spiritual potential and the need for political resistance. This mode of 'politicized mysticism' recurs in many representations of bebop and post-bop musicians. The mystical fire within and the angry fire of rebellion without merge in images which commonly conflate forms of liberation: the underlying notion is that spiritual freedom is indivisibly linked to political liberation. To quote, once again, Amiri Baraka, perhaps the master of this mode of politicized mysticism:

...it is in an age of The Miracles. Which must be put to work for us. All our energy. Even the brothers must finally be used for the lot. To raise u. To fly us all into the grace we seek. Which is, without light what they mean then by, Power. Amen. ('Now and Then' in Lange and Mackey 1993:169.)

The signifier 'Power' here evokes both *Black Power* and the *Power (and the Glory) of God*. Echoing the evangelical speeches of black ministers, Baraka speaks the need for transcendence: to fly out of oppression into a state of political and spiritual grace. In doing so, people would inhabit a world experienced only by the few, such as the 'brothers' in the passage below, who gain access to it through their music.

The musician and his brother had always talked about the spirits. They were good musicians talking about spirits, and they had them, the spirits, and soared with them when they played. [...] But when they stopped, the brothers, they were not that strong. Like any of us, the music, their perfection, was their perfect projection of themselves, past any bullshit walking around tied up unspiritual shit. (1993:166)

Music translates the musician and his 'brother' into an alternative order in which they soar with spirits; in which the material and spiritual worlds interact freely. Their flights to this realm are temporary since they, not unlike the shamanic trance, are contingent on the music which facilitates their passage. Playing jazz, they leave behind them the 'bullshit walking around tied up unspiritual shit' and, although fleetingly, experience the 'perfect projection of themselves'. The musicians, it seems, are transformed into their music and ascend to heights they would not normally have the strength to endure.

While aspects of shamanic practice abound in representations of jazz performances, musicians are often reflected in a combination of spiritual roles. As mentioned earlier, in literary jazz elements of shamanism are often conflated with the roles of Christian priests and prophets, or with (often essentialised) renditions of traditional African worship. It is with instances of these two that this analysis now proceeds before considering, at some length, some versions of Africanist mysticism harnessed in representational practice.

Jazz musicians are often clothed in the tropic cloth of the prophet who leads his people out of captivity into the Land of Canaan. As suggested in the discussion of Baraka's AM/TRAK, the promised land is conventionally both a spiritual and political possibility existing across the threshold of racist America. The following account, written in journalistic style, is taken from Herbert Simmons's *Man Walking on Eggshells* (1996), a novel reissued only recently following its original appearance in 1962. The extract is a review of a performance by the novel's protagonist, Raymond Douglas, published in the newspaper '*Muskogee Black Messenger*':

there is a modern-day Moses among the negro people today. [...] He is more powerful than any Jack Johnson, Florence Mills, or Joe Louis, for he is a people's spokesman, but not like Frederick Douglas, or Booker Washington, no glib-tongued orator he, but he is the gauge of the people and wherever he goes they come out to see him, for he has come into their hearts through the blues, a medium they understand; his rod is a golden trumpet and when he puts it to his lips and speaks they listen for the walls of Jericho to come tumbling down, believing he can roll back the Red Sea and lead them to the promised Land. This man, this nondescript jazz musician, resurrected from the tomb of obscurity, has suddenly burst upon the American scene like a human atomic bomb radiating hope, determination and direction on a disheartened people who never knew what it meant to be told they were somebody until he came along.... (1996:199-200)

A hotchpotch of biblical roles, Douglas is, among others, both an Old Testament prophet and an apocalyptic messiah raised from the dead ('the tomb of obscurity') to affirm his people's identity (to tell them they are 'somebody'). His music will bring down the walls of the modern American Jericho and he will roll back the Red Sea and guide his people to their liberty by giving them 'hope, determination and direction'. In comparison with Frederick Douglas and Booker T. Washington, Douglas does not have to persuade through 'glib-tongued' oratory, but can appeal directly to the feelings of those who witness his performance ('he has come into their hearts'). He

seems, then, to play directly into their historically-constituted souls and to announce possible journeys out of the deprivation in which his people languish. The journey this prophet offers is towards an affirmed identity liberated from the 'disheartening' reality of political, existential and spiritual exile. He seems, in a gesture of identity formation, to hold up a mirror to his people (to give them back to themselves by affirming their heritage and the fact of their exile) and, by doing so, allows them to recover who they *are* despite centuries of fragmenting oppression. The mode of reconciliation thus achieved is a form of cosmogonic myth: it situates African Americanness in a tropic continuity with spiritual mythologies and, in thus recovering, by analogy, a cultural history. It creates a homeland of salvaged selfhood.

Tropic journeys which are archeologies of identity, rather than a recourse to Biblical mythologies and their continuities in African American culture, often return to a mythologized Africanism. There are many constructions of this recourse. This study looks at one, the jazz musician as African priest, briefly, and at another, the mystical aspects of call-response and the ring, in some depth. In the first chapter, the cyclic journey to a form of Africanism was set out as a form of recovery (in both senses of the word). This recovery through a reclamation of elided pasts often seeks, perhaps predominantly in its more radical aspect, to establish contrary (seemingly originary) cultural icons and symbols. This is often achieved through a return to ritualistic practices of African music-making.¹⁷

Stanley Crouch, a prolific and accomplished jazz poet, describes a performance of John Coltrane in 'The Revelation' (in Feinstein and Komunyakaa 1996:32-3). This is an extract:

¹⁷ One such personal journey occurs in the opening section of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1965. Harmondsworth: Penguin: 7-16), but such representations are common as communal, rather than individual, experiences. See, among the texts already discussed, Rudolph Fisher's 'Common Meter' (1928), Langston Hughes's *Not Without Laughter* (1930), and Anne Petry's 'Solo on the Drums' (1971).

SCREECH CRY

Bird of blood with razor-sharp wings of boiling
stone fallen from God in my throat
claws my nostrils and sticks its feet
way down into my stomach
and I double over trying to vomit
forth this bird
to the rhythms of anklets ashake
in this dance of a black - blue-black
blue-black a black blue-black African Witch Doctor
wailing wailing -
scream high out into God,
fall heavily from the pole
of light He offers to the snow
of doubt that freezes
all Spirit's dancing gallop
to slabs of ice across the tongue

Intoning to some primal spiritual reality, the poem suggests, Coltrane's music heralds the violent practices of an African mystical ritual that rend apart the priest in the act of invocation. The wounding is experienced in the anguish of a performance which expresses the pain and liberation of the priest reaching up to God. In this, as in many other instances of Africanism, Africa stands as a site for writing the mystical, as a reservoir of tropes that comprise a dreamscape of history and analogy. This is not to dismiss such returns to the African wish-space as contrived or banal. Effecting or actualizing existential and political territories in these narratives is a profound social practice with far-reaching significance, and many instances of the practice are, of course, returns to real histories. In much literature, Africa is, though, a remote continent of figurative possibility in which mystical and musical practices are so diverse as to answer almost every figural need. The proliferation of Rider Haggard

imagery in jazz literature must, as one mode of figuration, give one pause. In poems such as Crouch's, though, Africa is the location of a mysticism which counters the Calvinist restraint of Western discourses of spirituality. In doing so, and in offering an alternative, it erects a tropic alter to *different* gods and celebrates the histories of *different* practices. In 'The Revelation', as perhaps logically in many poetic representations of John Coltrane, Africanism is about establishing the gods of a political and ideational alterity and giving them, momentarily, free reign.

It is not possible here to do justice to the rich vein in postcolonial and diasporic theorising which maps the continuities in social practices from African societies to African American culture. A discussion of mysticism in representations of jazz can not, though, reasonably omit some consideration of the mystical aspects of the trickster trope and of the ring. Samuel A. Floyd's *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* (1995) is an important contribution to studies of the diaspora. It maps continuities (perhaps at the expense of discontinuities) between various West African musical traditions and religious rituals and African American musical, religious, literary and oral practices. Floyd, at the conclusion of his text, summarises his project.

In tracing African American music making from its roots in traditional Africa to its manifestations in the United States, I have focussed on the role of myth, ritual, and the tropes of Call-Response in the continuation of its character. From the African ring, through the ring shout of slave culture, the funeral parade practices of the early New Orleans jazzmen, and Esu's revisiting of the bluesmen in the 1920's and the beboppers in the 1940's, to the free jazz of the 1960s and the concert-hall works of the 1980s and 1990s, the imperatives of myth and ritual have been evident. (1995:267)

From this it is clear that Floyd's work is an application and development of Henry Louis Gates's *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), that remarkable introduction of the trickster figures (Esu-Elegbara and the Signifying Monkey) as tropes to conceptualize

textual strategies in African American literature. While Gates does anchor much of his analytical scheme in discussions of music, particularly his explication of signifyin(g) on another's performance as a defining element of jazz method, Floyd sets out to uncover the tropic archives and organizational principles of African American music itself. His explication returns repeatedly to the idea of signifyin(g) and to the trope of Call-Response, two musical practices Floyd presents (incrementally through his text) as practices of identity, affirmations of a particular ontology and as a specific version of spirituality.

It may seem signally perverse to turn, in this study, from Gates's literary analysis to a work on musicology and musical history. Gates's text, though, is concerned primarily with the practices of signifyin(g) *in* discourse and, therefore, most readily enables a reading of discursive strategies (or, to adopt more formalist terms, of *structure* and *style*) in jazz literature.¹⁸ Given that the topic of this study concerns the *representation* of jazz itself, it is logical to turn to the musical tropes and practices themselves which are represented in literature as the basis of a mode of spirituality.

Earlier I mentioned in passing that theoretical (and literary) discourse can perform a distinctly shamanic function in advancing alternative epistemologies and particular strategies for the recovery of identity and history. The incorporation of Esu-Elegbara and the *orisha* (the Yoruba gods) as analytical devices in an alternative epistemology may be, in part, a shamanic theoretical move by Gates and Floyd. The very archeology of knowledge that their projects entail may have facilitated the creation of an alternative pantheon of myth-gods for contemporary African American cultural analysis. An argument could be posited that the *ur*-tropes of Yoruba cosmology (especially since they arrive in critical discourse with mystical associations) have been elevated to the status of transcendental signifiers and have, therefore, acquired the *aura* of the sacrosanct. Without undermining the validity, accuracy or pertinence of

¹⁸ Analyses of Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992) or Xam Wilson Cartiér's *Be-bop, Re-bop* (1990), for instance, both of which use jazz as a model for their discursivity rather than being predominantly representations *of* jazz, would be more appropriate to Gates's method.

Gates or Floyd's exegesis, their elevation of the trickster, Esu, and of the *orisha* to organizing principles of knowledge and conduct, gives them (in the light of the traces of mysticism the names drag with them) a spiritual *aura*. When analyses, like Floyd's of jazz method and structure, see the Yoruba gods in every element and gesture, they make jazz inherently spiritual. The analytical method bestows its intrinsic values onto its object. My argument may seem circular, but stated simply, I contend that deploying intrinsically spiritual tropes in exegesis, allied with the elevation of transcendental signifiers, creates a matrix of spirituality in which the object so analysed is embedded. The device used in explication is implicated in creating the content which is 'discovered'. This point seems important when we turn to a discussion of the seemingly spiritual qualities of signifyin(g) and Call-Response.

In many representations of jazz, signifyin(g) and Call-Response have a spiritual mien. They exist as the antithesis of the solitary, contemplative traditions of much Eastern and European mysticism since they are methods of achieving integration and a *communal* transcendence through interaction. While they might be Dionysian in nature, this need not be their defining aspect, as will emerge in this discussion. In musical terms, signifyin(g) is, of course, the process of commenting (ironically, in an explicatory mode, as parody or pastiche, or with adulation) on the performance of someone else. It can also take the form of extending the ideas introduced, exploiting facets of their structure or using them as departure points for other musical ideas. Whatever its specific texture, signifyin(g) is dialogical and is rooted in notions of reciprocity and perpetual integration into the community of performers. Call-Response is a particular mode of signifyin(g) characteristic of the ring rituals of West African (and other) societies. It can use any of the strategies mentioned above, but is also often characterized by 'cries, hollers, and shouts' (Floyd 1995:123). The reason that Floyd emphasizes Call-Response is because it has distinctly mystical implications among signifyin(g) practices. The answered call, Floyd holds, actualizes a commonality, even a unity, of the 'speaking' subjects. This 'unity' is mystical, not only in the oceanic oneness which is achieved, but in the capacity of the communal spirit to move individuals to a different state of being.

The *ring* is an extension of the mysticism of the Call-Response trope. It stands for a unity and cyclicity which has profoundly spiritual implications. A useful explanation of this is Weinstein's analysis (quoted in Floyd) of the structure of Coltrane's revolutionary 1965 recording, *Ascension*:

The thirty-eight minute *Ascension* doesn't so much 'progress' to a clear dramatic resolution as much as complete a cycle. This sense of music completing a cycle speaks to the circle image in many traditional African religions. While the Christian symbol of the cross graphically illustrates the intersection of worldly time and eternity, the circle suggests that through experiencing the rhythmic cycles of worldly life consciously and repeatedly, we spin ourselves into a sense of the divinely eternal. (1995:189)

The ring form, its movement and integration, has a history extending from African societies, through slave ring-shouts (famously performed in Congo Square), to traditions of signifyin(g) in the round in jazz performance.¹⁹ In looking at literary representations of jazz, it is important to note the genealogy of the ring, Call-Response and signifyin(g), for in that genealogy exists a wealth of spiritual connotation.

¹⁹ Floyd's analysis assumes the existence of a cultural memory (almost as *langue*) which is endlessly apparent in an array of cultural phenomena (analogous to instances of *parole*). He is explicit that this 'memory' is abiding and a basis for understanding.

In the cultural memory of African Americans, *life* is cyclic, as is time, as is their music - and all of these elements symbolize the ring and contradict linear progression. The figures and events of African American music making connect the individual and the group to the realm of cultural memory, to the realm of spirit and myth. (1995:231)

I have used the notion of the 'space of the wish' earlier in this analysis. Floyd's assumption of the all-pervasive nature of the tropes he identifies should be treated with some scepticism and seems to exist more as part of the ideological and social history of African Americanness than as simply verifiable.

In Henry Dumas's short story 'Will the Circle be Unbroken?' (in Lange and Mackey 1993:178-182), Jan, a white tenor saxophonist, and two friends insist (against the explicit warning of the bouncer) on entering the Sound Club in Harlem. Probe, the bandleader, is playing what is named an 'afro-horn', one of three mystical instruments produced, so rumour would have it, in ancient Egypt. Prior to the arrival of the unwelcome guests, the performance is already achieving mystical heights.

Probe's dark full head tilted towards the vibrations of the music as if the ring of sound from the six wailing pieces was tightening, creating a spiralling circle.

The black audience, unaware at first of its collectiveness, had begun to move in a soundless rhythm as if it were the tiny twitchings of an embryo. The waiters in the club fell against the wall, shadows, dark pillars holding up the building and letting the free air purify the mind of the club.

The drums took an oblique. Magwa's hands, like the forked tongue of a dark snake, probed the skins, probed the whole belly of the coming circle.

Beginning to close the circle, Haig's alto arc, rapid piano incisions, Billy's thin green flute arcs and tangents, Stace's examinations of his own trumpet discoveries, all fell separately, yet together, into a blanket which Mojohn had begun weaving on the bass when the set began. (1993:178)

The mystical ring is formed through the combination of centring and interaction, of ensemble and individual contribution (this is reminiscent of Mackey's rendition of the Tampouri music with which this dissertation began). The 'collectiveness' of the group (and the audience) makes the space enclosed by the circle a sacred site capable of birthing a spirit into the world: the 'twitchings of [the] embryo' are followed later in the story by an emergence from the 'womb' of the 'afro-horn' growing 'like a child [...] out of itself' (1993:181). This ring hearkens back to the circles of sacred African dances and their continuation in the practices of slaves on plantations. It is a space in which, through Call-Response, a genuine collectivity emerges and that union

facilitates a particular mode of transcendence and an affirmation of an African American cultural legacy.

The particular emphasis on the intricate balance of individuality and group identity is highly significant since this is commonly taken to be both the special attribute of jazz and the 'essence' of African American culture and spirituality. Certainly this essential quality is advanced, and at times assumed, in Floyd's work. Even when an individual becomes dominant, it is in his or her centring and uniting function. In this extract, Probe has reached the 'depths' of the 'afro-horn's' potential and, while he is the centre of the circle, the emphasis of the passage is on the cohesiveness of the group and the shared nature of the experience.

Probe was deep into the rear-action sax monologue. The whole circle now, like a bracelet of many colored lights, gyrated under Probe's wisdom. Probe was a thoughtful, full-headed black man with narrow eyes and a large nose. His lips swelled over the reed and each note fell into the circle like an acrobat on a tight rope stretched radially across the centre of the universe. (1993:181)

Both individual adept and coordinator of the circle rotating around him, Probe has uncovered, through the labour of practising, the sounding of his race and announces to them their ancient locatedness in the universe. The emphasis in the passage on blackness is congruent with the story's conclusion. Jan, and his two white friends, who convince the bouncer to admit them to the club despite his warning that the session is 'for Brother and Sisters only' (1993:179), are killed by the sound of the 'afro-horn' at full tilt. The sheer sound of blackness, it seems, is a power too immense and rupturing for white people to endure. Probe has tapped into a wellspring of history and identity through the mystical instrument and his announcement of this truth can be borne only by those who are a part of it. Those outside the circle can be obliterated by the powers it generates and which sustain it.

Many instances of the ring and Call-Response are overtly political in asserting black identity and heritage. While 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken?' is an overt instance, any number of examples are apparent in jazz literature. Many of the short stories discussed so far in this dissertation (ranging from the conclusion of 'Sonny's Blues' and 'Common Meter' to 'The Plantation Club' and 'Solo on the Drums') rely on calling and responding across the (at times a figurative) ring for the sense of unity on which their spiritual import relies. Spencer, discussing the 'theology of the blues' in his study *The Blues and Evil* (1993), states:

What Gruver identified as fundamentally religious about the blues was not alone the deification of women and men, but its engendering of renewal, reunion, and 'at-onement' for them. It reconciled opposites – symbolised by the thematization of heterosexual love – and thus revealed the unity of all nature. As it turns out, this 'new' worldview was none but the old one – an Afrocentric, holistic perspective on the world and human personhood. (1993:36)

It is an analogous return to a holism and Afrocentrism that is effected in the ring, which returns its members to, and then propels into the future, a different and particular ontology and spirituality rooted in communal transcendence.

Thus far, I have referred to the *trickster* figure only as the characterization of signifyin(g) practices in jazz musical practice. The trickster figure occurs in jazz literature, perhaps predictably, in a number of forms. Ben Sidran asserts that, following Emancipation,

thousands of questing Negroes took to the roads. [...] The travelling musician, who had taken on the role of truth-teller from the black Preacher, the role of trickster, or 'bad nigger,' from the Devil, became the ultimate symbol of freedom. (1995:24)

His conflation of trickster attributes and the characteristics of the 'bad nigger' under the sign of the 'Devil' is a common move in blues mythologies, which have a distinct and widespread influence on representations of jazz. As was demonstrated in the first chapter of this dissertation, jazz (and the blues) are often configured as the secular travesty of Calvinism and the inversion of its doctrines and enforced restraints. Spencer explains that, in this version of alterity, African Americans saw the trickster figure who displayed 'wit and guile [and as] capable of manipulatively procuring sustenance in the face of abject oppression, [as] an emulative model of behaviour that they transmitted in their trickster tales' (1993:7). The 'badman,' commonly conflated with the figure of Esu, is less simply mischievous than malign. The 'badman' derives his power directly from the devil (Spencer 1993:8) and is praised less for his capacity to signify with wit and guile than for his complete disregard for the rules of Christian convention (and signification). He is praised to the extent to which his behaviour contravenes established morals and anticipated submissiveness. The trickster and 'badman' both subvert hegemonic ideologies while seeking redress for the history of slavery and systematic oppression, and, as a consequence, both figures become, in many accounts, popular heroes of African American culture. Spencer (among others) has traced the connection between voodoo-hoodoo, which he describes as 'the collective memorization' (1993:12) of African religious traditions, and the recuperation of the Devil into blues mythology. Certainly, the Devil, in an almost Miltonic mode, is a figure of vigorous energy possessed of a vibrancy, who is the creative enemy of white mythologies.

Many representations of jazz are comprised of traces of 'badmen' and tricksters. Any number of the instances of Dionysian tropes discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation arguably exist in this lineage.²⁰ A story to which I have referred, and to which I will refer again in my conclusion, Eudora Welty's 'Powerhouse' (in Breton 1990:29-43) is however particularly interesting in this regard. Powerhouse is a

²⁰ We need only think back to aspects of the carnivalesque as well as to Hughes's *Not Without Laughter* (1930) in which the 'banjo scolded in diabolic glee' (1990:22) as the band literally collapses the Calvinist world of Aunt Harriet.

pianist whose identity, just like the truth of the stories he tells, slides endlessly under various names and discursive processes. His band, which also changes name from one session to the next, is, in one variation, 'Powerhouse and His Tasmanians' and its leader is described as ' "Nigger man"? – he looks more Asiatic, monkey, Jewish, Babylonian, Peruvian, fanatic, devil' (1990:29). He is 'vast and obscene [...] marvelous, frightening' (1990:29) and is 'so monstrous as he send everybody into oblivion' (1990:30). Powerhouse is depicted as the combination of the trickster (in his elusive stories that endlessly play off variations of themselves and the contributions of others – just like his music) and the badman (in his monstrosity, strength and willingness to hurt and toy with his audience and band members). The final image in the story, of Powerhouse's face transfigured by a 'vast, impersonal and yet furious grimace' (1990:43) is the last in a succession of demonic moments in the story.

The satanic is so associated with jazz as a legacy of the tropic equivalences initiated in African American culture, that traces migrate into narratives diverse in setting and import. Martin Gardner's 'The Devil and the Trombone' (in Breton 1990:44–7) is an interesting example. *En route* from a meeting of the campus Philosophical Society, a young professor wanders into the university chapel. Seated at the organ, playing 'chords [he] had never heard' (1990:44), is a white-robed, luminescent angel. The music is entirely affirming, instilling in the narrator a sense of complete well-being and universal understanding. Then, from out of the shadows, steps a naked figure, with '[d]ark reddish hair [covering] his swarthy arms' (1990:45), holding a slide trombone. The first sound the trombone player produces is 'a low, outrageous note like the sound of a Bronx cheer' (1990:46). The dark man continues to improvise 'in a relaxed New Orleans style' (1990:46), producing music that wrenches the narrator away from the complacent sense of cosmic harmony induced by the angel's music; 'All that we call good in life, I saw clearly was nothing but an illusion' (1990:46). The trombonist, using his tail as a mute, and the angel then begin to jam. On one level the jamming may seem a synthesis of two worldviews, a reconciliation of the satanic profane and the messianic holy. In fact, though, the organ simple provides a

counterpoint for the dominant 'loud and wicked smears of the trombone' (1990:46-77). The devilish dissonance of jazz is dominant and overriding and, paraphrasing Blake's comment about Milton, Gardner is clearly of the devil's company but, like most jazz writers, knows it well.

Thus far in this chapter, in addition to the use of Romantic tropes in the configuration of jazz music and performance, I have considered an array of roles ascribed to jazz musicians and music in the course of configuration. While touching on more general themes, I have discussed the use of shamanic tropes at length, the use of biblical figures (prophet, preacher, messiah) and African priests, the tropes of Call-Response and the ring and the uses of the trickster and 'badman' under the general sign of the 'devilish'. In the introduction to this chapter, I suggested I would conclude it by mentioning some of its obvious omissions. The three that I have chosen, each of which warrants a study on its own, concern the attainment of transcendence in the course of performance, the deification of musicians and, returning to Hodgkinson's (1996:59) distinction discussed at the outset of this chapter, those representations which reflect music itself as possessing mystical attributes.

A convention in recounting the experience of performing music and of representing performance in literature is an emphasis on individual flights of transcendence beyond the confines of selfhood. The jazz vocalist, Carmen Lundy, having recalled her experience of evangelical church services in the South, goes on to draw a parallel with her experience of singing jazz:

I can remember some unbelievable things from [the time I used to attend services] which I experience even now when I sing jazz. Sometimes I really feel that I am just a vehicle, the body, and that something is singing through me, like I am not controlling anything that I am singing. [...] That's what I mean by the spiritual thing. (in Berliner 1994:392.)

Ronald Shannon Jackson, a jazz multi-instrumentalist, explains:

That's what music is. It's chanting; it's meditation; it's yoga. It's all these things. In order to play something transcends. Something happens with the physical, the spiritual and the mental state in which they combine, and their energy is turned free. It's a cleansing experience which in a religion they would say, "It's of another world." The state I am talking about even transcends emotions. (in Berliner 1994:393.)

The psychologist, Abraham Maslow, explains these phenomenological accounts in terms of 'peak experience' (Woodward 1992:104). He claims that moments of intense creativity can culminate in feelings of complete happiness in which self-consciousness is lost and the artist feels completely at one with the world. The individuated self seems to disappear in an emotional experience that takes on the semblance of a mystical transformation of consciousness away from the ego. All binaries, according to Maslow, give way as the individual feels a godlike apprehension of the oneness of the universe (1992:104). I refer to Maslow not to reduce the accounts by Lundy and Jackson, but to suggest the widespread nature of the phenomena to which they refer. The apparent intrusion of the mystical into experience under the circumstances he discusses is sufficiently commonly related for Maslow to consider it an intrinsic aspect of being which demands explanation in any ontological psychology. For Maslow the peak experience is obviously psychological, rather than metaphysical, but interestingly it is, according to those whose accounts he studied, most commonly induced by sex and music. Literary representations of musical performance are often accounts of 'peak experiences' such as those related by both Lundy and Jackson.

There are many ways of accounting for the sense of transcendence experienced in the meditative space of performing music. Several accounts suggest that it is the ontogenetic process itself that creates the sense of godlike apprehension: to play an alternative reality into existence is to manifest the power of 'worlding'. This entails a different relationship to time, which becomes structured (musically) in ways distinct from the *noise of time* in the world. Not only is the musician able to create a world, he or she is also in the process of defining time and what unfolds in its course. These

processes, in many accounts, facilitate flights of fancy beyond the habitual and familiar.

A novel constructed around such 'flights' is Nicholas Royle's *Saxophone Dreams* (1996). Ankers, a Norwegian saxophonist (most probably based, given the accounts of his music, on Jan Garbarek, the Norwegian saxophonist adopted by Manfred Eicher's ECM label) receives tapes of meditative free jazz from a persecuted Czechoslovakian musician, Hašek. In improvising around the melodies and rhythms of these recordings, Ankers finds himself transported into the surreal world of Paul Delvaux's paintings.

The vision came when he began playing. Sometimes it was a series of still images – a ruined palace with black windows and a broken statue cast out on the road; a cobbled town square dwarfed by a disproportionately large naked woman; a cortege of women in lace moving toward a series of large arches; a woman in a long dress looking at her naked reflection in a mirror; women wearing large knotted bows in a rock-strewn square surrounded by derelict ancient buildings and cracked hills; a woman embracing a statue of a male double amputee in the foreground, and the background an old man with a paintbrush and a palette walking towards a line of dunes, beyond which lies the sea. [...]

Ankers wrote constantly to Hašek, describing the visions and asking for more tapes. Once he had played along with one tape and had seen the vision, there was no way he could do it again differently. The improvisation he produced in the first take became the definitive accompaniment to the piece. Nor could he rerun the vision by playing the same music again, suggesting that the generation of images was a function of the creation of the music. (1996:26)

What distinguishes *Saxophone Dreams* among texts which represent jazz musicians entranced into the solitary experience of a mystical state is its detailed mapping of the visionary world itself. As the novel progresses, the 'real' world gives way to a world

governed by the logic of Delvaux's landscapes and surrealized nudes. Music remains, throughout the novel, the conduit between the 'real' and the surreal. Facilitating flights from the world of cognition, it translates the musicians beyond themselves and the political machinations of their contemporary European context, into a realm of aestheticized desire, into a landscape across which move the figures of their fears, urges and hopes. Jazz also remains their one hope of return from the, at times, nightmarish and threatening surreality into which they move. Thus, while it dislocates their perception, it also offers the only feasible anchor in a shared understanding of the music itself.

A characteristic depiction of a 'flight' occurs when Hašek is listening to music on his car stereo, Ankers begins to improvise on the alto, and Ian, a British nurse who has been 'led' to Ankers's music, drums out a rhythm on the dashboard.

The music swirled around the car, increasing its hold on its makers. Soon they were as good as unconscious. Their bodies had become part of the music, fed by the concoction of rhythm and melody as much as they bled into it. Ankers saw vast stretches of sand dunes, the wind blowing tunes between them.

(1996:146)

The dissolution of the ego as reality recedes in the face of music entails the necessary intermediate step of the musician becoming 'at one' with the music. The music comes to 'possess' the musician, but not in the sense that an outside force might take control of an individual while simply expelling the self. In this form of mystical possession, the musician's identity merges with the music creating a synthesis which collapses the binary self/sound. Rather than tropes of insurgency, such as those which characterize the images of spirit-possession in primitivist discourses, the synthesis of the ego and jazz is most often the 'enlightenment' of the individual moved to a different level of cognition by the different order of space and time which comprises the music. The self is literally swept away by the music and a new self emerges which can envisage a different order of experience and selfhood. It is this relocation of the self that

structures *Saxophone Dreams*, but which speaks to many of the representations of a mystical transportation which occurs at the 'peak experience' of playing or listening to jazz.

The capacity of the musician to create a 'world' in music regularly leads to the deification of the musician in literary configurations. Rather than facilitating access to a godhead or universal spirit (as discussed thus far in this chapter), jazz is often configured as the voice of a god. The musical creator comes to stand for the Creator who makes a new order out of chaos, who, to return to Baldwin's 'Sonny's Blues', 'is dealing with the roar rising from the void and imposing order on it as it hits the air' (1990:127). We can think back, once more, to the first chapter of this dissertation which described the Dionysian 'gods of jazz' and their acolytes. Kerouac's *On the Road* (1991), for instance, in the famous Shearing passages, sees Dean exclaim, 'There he is! That's him! Old God! Old God Shearing' (1991:128). After Shearing's departure, '...Dean pointed to the empty piano seat. 'God's empty chair,' he said' (1991:128). As in this example, deification tends to be a tropic function of a fan's adulation and praise. If the musician is worshipped as a god, then tropes shift the performer and his music into the realm of the supernatural or mythic.

In Julio Cortázar's 'Louis, Super-Cronopio: Louis Armstrong Concert Paris, 9 November 1952' (in Lange and Mackey 1993:17-21), Armstrong

pulls from Zeus's platform an extraordinary, mysterious red vessel, tall and narrow, which appears to be either a dicebox or the container of the Holy Grail, and when he takes a drink it provides the wildest speculations from the Cronopios in the audience: some maintain that Louis is drinking milk, while others flush with indignation at this theory, declaring that such a vessel could only contain the blood of a bull or wine from Crete.... (1993:20-21)

The representation of Armstrong concludes with the statement: 'Louis joy of those who are worthy of him' (1993:21). When he starts singing 'the established order of

things is suspended' (1993:21) as he takes on the mantle of a high priest or of the god himself. The concert becomes a mythic space in which ancient rituals are performed. If we are 'worthy', we are ushered into an alternative world of joy, a different mode of ecstatic being that will result in abiding dreams at the centre of which 'a little Louis is blowing and singing' (1993:21). Armstrong becomes a holy presence which energizes and centres being; he becomes a mythic god who bequeaths ecstatic being to us, if we are worthy disciples. The deification of Shearing and Armstrong is characteristic of a trend in much jazz literature. The music clearly gains converts, has its legendary evangelists (Art Blakey immediately comes to mind), is held by fans to change their lives and comes to dominate every waking hour of its practitioners. To make gods out of its creators is a logical extension of the desires which form its production and reception.

John Clellon Holmes's *The Horn* (1958) concludes with the following:

For somewhere at the suburb end of a subway line, where the wet streets glisten in the faint street lights, a gawky, awkward youth, black or white (or something in between), walks in a formless discontent, dreaming a new dream, hoping a new hope, loving a new love; and perhaps tomorrow he will begin his arduous woodshed, and (rank and living in armpit and crotch) will give up his hoarded money, and go out carrying the horn, to fashion on it a new song - a further chorus of the one continuing song - as he, too, progresses inevitably down his own bleak street, towards his own blank wall, where all the music ends; for only the song goes on, continually creating the need to create it anew. (1990:243)

Apart from the endless configurations of musicians in mystical and spiritual mantles, jazz music itself is often reflected as mystical. The music, representations such as the last part of *The Horn* would have it, is an ongoing series of transformations, an arcane, yet popular tradition into which anyone can be initiated and which allows an individual to contribute to something enduring, omnipresent and in excess of him or

herself. Like Shelley's 'one poem', the tradition of jazz is a spiritual continuum to which artists contribute their capacities: a grand presence in excess of the present or any individual which is nevertheless mobilized, revitalized and extended with each performance of import. This notion, of the metaphysical presence of the music, occurs in various versions, each of which suggests the abiding presence of a truth, even the voice of God, in the 'one continuing song' which is jazz.

Conclusion

It would be antithetical to the method of this dissertation to retrace its steps or to offer, at yet another remove, an index to this rather fragmentary map. This account of representations of jazz in literature was an attempt to intervene in a range of textual *practices*, to improvise an analysis on some *uses* of jazz in literary discourse. Jazz music and performances are spaces for intervention in which rhetorical 'movements' configure identities, delineate possible histories and mark ontologies. Jazz is, among so many other things, a site for writing stories and a model of ways of making tropic moves. An art form so often described in terms of journeys of one sort or another, it seems to encourage or facilitate 'traversal communications' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:11) between the music (and its performance) and other planes of textuality. This might be due to a complex combination of the nature of the music, its historical and political context and the web of signification that has grown up around it in the century of its existence. Origins aside, jazz writing, these journeys from multiple entry points to any number of destinations, suggests the need for a Nomadology (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:23) which allows for thinking in terms of movement, for thinking on your feet, or of improvising ways into and out of meaning. To articulate jazz is to travel between domains of significance, to connect planes of signification by positing a provisional *here* and *there* for every discursive journey. This dissertation has traced only some of these journeys. It remains to suggest where such a tracing might leave us.

Literary jazz can be read as an array of attempts to come to terms with the contingencies of ateleology. Just as jazz improvisation can be thought of as an 'extreme occasion', so, too, is configuring it in discourse. To the extent that jazz resists transcription, it also resists tropic translation into monolithic grand narratives; it induces a crisis of reading. In representing an activity that is provisional and fleeting, which redefines itself at the speed of sound, discourse takes on a litheness, an epistemological versatility in its construction of the implications of its object. It is conceivable that representations of jazz, given that they comprise discourse *in extremis*, may reveal something of the effects and consequences of language under strain. The 'Creaking of the Word' (Mackey 1986:115), the departure point for this dissertation, is the sound of the condition of language itself when it begins to give

way under particular representational pressures. This study is an encounter with, and attempts to reconstruct, some of the discursive scaffolding which stops language collapsing under pressure, which stands against a simple resignation to the ineffability of music.

In mapping these textual accommodations and navigations, this dissertation relies on a strongly intertextual approach in literary analysis and in readings of popular culture. What emerges are an array of strong corollaries between the representations themselves and the theories of representational practice which are the means of scrutiny: at various junctures the object of interpretation and the interpretational method become indistinguishable. The strain of representational language is inevitably transferred to an analytical discourse that attempts to re-present its practices. While this seemed a problem in the first instance, as the study proceeded it became clear that both were most productively organized under the sign of 'improvisation' (in the sense in which that word might account for the organization of space through intervention, as detailed by De Certeau). Both configuring jazz music or performances in discourse *and* accounting for those configurations, seemed best read through examples offered by the art form itself. Both are interventions in other texts which owe something to the integrity of the original but also allow for any number of creative variations and individual actualisations. Just as jazz improvisation seems a workable model for reading literature intertextually, it also seems a productive model for interpretive writing.

The very exclusion on which this dissertation was based proved to be informative. Leland H. Chambers's 'Improvising and Mythmaking in Eudora Welty's 'Powerhouse' (Gabbard ed.1995:54-69) advances the notion that Powerhouse's musical performance is paralleled by his 'mythmaking': that his improvisations on the piano are the same mode of production as his narrative about his identity and circumstance. In the course of the his banter with his fellow musicians, Powerhouse takes up any number of positions on a story of his lover, Gypsy (who is either dead or has left him for Uranus Lockwood). Reacting to the comments of his fellow musicians, he weaves a changing narrative in which the major events are unstable and names and places are subjected to endless slippage. Similarly, Powerhouse's music shifts (from sentimental waltz to strident, almost demonic improvisation), constructing endless possibilities of mood and meaning. Throughout the story, even Powerhouse's identity

is indeterminate: he is described variously as 'Asiatic, monkey, Jewish, Babylonian, Peruvian, fanatic, devil' and as 'marvelous, frightening' (1990:29). He is, in the words of Chambers, an 'altogether unclassifiable figure' (1995:63).

The fluidities to which Chambers alludes suggest that the representation of jazz might be most meaningful (or resonant) when the version of mimesis enacts an aspect of the music's method rather than simply setting out to capture it in adjectival predication or tropic translation. Writing, we can deduce from Chamber's argument, best approaches jazz at a tangent to the object, playing within its possibilities rather than attempting a direct tracing of its existence and meaning. Representation is, thus, at its most productive when it looks for multiple ways into the music, when it truly functions as a map which exists in any number of relations to the real it approaches. Having been compelled by the limited scope of this project to perform various exclusions, the omission of incorporations of jazz in discursive form and style may have been the most significant: I would go so far as to make the evaluative claim that the most effective representations of jazz combine the more oblique influence of structure with head-on attempts at tropic configuration.

On a more directed note, this study has raised any number of possibilities for research into the spaces (existential, political, anthropological) mapped in *non-literary* accounts of jazz. It would be informative to map the (form and content of) narratives of South African jazz musicians, for instance, in terms of the spaces they afford, contest, delineate, refuse or colonise. Each of the four levels of explication in this dissertation would provide a useful framework for such a narratological study. Given that South African jazz is regularly configured as allied with the forces of resistance, as archived in bodies which were tortured, imprisoned or exiled and as a means of carnivalesque escape, the tropic reservoirs discussed seem particularly apposite. On the other hand, it might also be possible to examine the extent to which the tropes discussed, the journeys conjectured, comprise musician's argot and are, hence, implicated in the origin and the production of the music itself. If, as has been assumed throughout this dissertation, the discursive construction of the music is, at times, indistinguishable from the realities of its production, then an understanding of one might well enrich our thinking about the other.

Facing the dilemma of ending, I return to Nathaniel Mackey's *The Bedouin Hornbook*.

The question I was left with, of course, was: What can one do to outmaneuver the inertia both of what one knows and of what one feels or presumes to feel? There must be some way, I'm convinced, to invest in the ever so slight suggestion of 'compost' I continue to get from the word 'compose'.

I don't claim to have come up with a solution yet. I've been listening to a lot of Pharaoh Sanders' solo on the version of 'My Favorite Things' on *Coltrane Live at the Village Vanguard Again!* The fellow who wrote the liner notes quotes Trane as having said that he was 'trying to work out a kind of writing that will allow for more plasticity, more viability, more room for improvisation in the statement of the melody itself.' That may well be what I am after as well. What gets me about Pharaoh's solo is the way he treats the melody towards the end of it, coming on to it with a stuttering, jittery tongue-tied articulation which appears to say that the simple amenities or naive consolations of so innocuous a tune have long since broken down. (1986:79)

Musical endings, even of tunes which are not 'innocuous,' tend by *convention* to be 'simple amenities or naive consolations'. They announce a conclusion decisively and, in doing so, establish the point to (or from) which listening and interpretation should occur. They presage simultaneously a hermeneutic boundary and the horizon of potential. Jazz performances, particularly the *avant-garde*, perpetually unsettle notions of closure, of a linear progression to a declared resolution. The 'conclusion' of this dissertation, in the style of Pharaoh Sanders's solo, is a 'jittery-tongued articulation' with none of the certainty of an ending. Perhaps postmodernism could be described as the condition of 'stuttering'; of multiple ruptures of coherence or the endless fragmentation of the certitudes of linearity and meaning. This, then, is a stuttering conclusion which on no level completes (neither supplements nor traces the outlines of) the map of literary representations of jazz music and performance. What it does do, though, is claim a degree of 'viability': it suggests that some of the ideas explored might facilitate productive trajectories for further writing.

If we extend Coltrane's notion, that he was 'trying to work out a *kind of writing* that will allow for more plasticity, more viability, more room for improvisation in the statement of the melody itself [emphasis mine]', to theoretical and literary discourse, we may be edging towards something resembling Deleuze and Guattari's *assemblage*.

In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an *assemblage*. (1987:3–4)

The originating gesture towards 'The Creaking of the Word' was a confession that any interpretive or representational fixity is a rhetorical manoeuvre on the verge of being 'overcome by wobble' (1986:114). To give a definite form to an assemblage, here not simply individual texts, but a range of diverse texts unified only by their object (the complex and multiple assemblages which are jazz), is to attempt a *tracing*. For Deleuze and Guattari, *assemblages*, comprised of intricate and shifting lines of force, of spaces and strata endlessly being made and unmade, cannot be traced without alleging a 'competence' (1987:13). To trace (in the sense of copying a form without implicating the inscription, or to follow step by step an already-existing pattern) is to elide the force of flow across and between planes of signification, it is to pretend that an assemblage is both static and succinct. The competence required, in the instance of this dissertation, would be, to return to Deleuze and Guattari, to discern all (or even the dominant) 'transformational multiplicities' (1987:11) in the assemblage of the texts which comprise its object. Such an exercise would be both impossible and undesirable, especially in the light of potentials of open improvisation as a *methodology* for analysis.

If to trace is to organize, stabilize, and neutralize the multiplicities of a text (1987:13), and this seems anathema to both the texts in question (because of their number and multiplicities) and the 'object' (jazz music) or activity (jazz performance) they represent, what is the alternative? Deleuze and Guattari suggest that a *rhizome*, their analytic trope, '[agglomerates]

very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive' (1987:7). Every point on the rhizome is connected to all other points, since succinct points give way endlessly to the lines of force of which they are a static expression. Since we cannot, then, trace a rhizome (and an *assemblage* is rhizoid), our alternative is the *map*.

What distinguishes a map from a tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. [...] The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. [...] The map has to do with performance.... (1987:12–3)

The map pertains to this study in three ways: first, to the process of improvised musical performance itself,¹ second, to the acts of mapping jazz performance in literary discourse and, finally, to my attempted map of the tropic configurations which traverse and organize these literary spaces. These three levels are not, taking the *rhizome* and *assemblage* as an account of 'texts', distinct, but are linked by semiotic chains which collapse the boundaries between subjects and objects and disperse texts (social, musical, literary, analytical, subjective) endlessly into one another. Jazz, at moments the object of analysis, at others motivating a *way of writing*, is at all times a lesson in mapping, a way of thinking in variations, extensions, revisions, reversals, qualifications, provisionality, in short, of improvising.

Deleuze and Guattari are explicit about the dangers of improvisation.

¹ Ornette Coleman might even 'prove' *A Thousand Plateaus* if we consider that the 'rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is a short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exists and its own lines of flight.' (1987:21)

One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune. Along sonorous, gestural, motor lines that mark the customary path of a child and graft themselves onto or begin to bud 'lines of drift' with different loops, knots, speeds, movements, gestures, and sonorities. (1987:312)

To improvise is to be nomadic. The tropes of journey which have dominated this dissertation from the start, from the first walk of the Aboriginal ancestors, who sing into existence the land they traverse, to the shamanic flights of healing, stand for the *meaning* of improvisation. To improvise is to move without assured beginnings (who apart from the Aboriginal ancestors sings the first song?) and certainly without the comfort of an ending. It is, though, to describe lines, as, to quote De Certeau, 'a mobile point 'describes' a curve' (1984:116). Improvisation is about making a difference by announcing (sonorous) presence and then threading that presence through a proliferating number of possibilities. It is, then, the practice of movement which looks backwards (to return to Gioia's jazz aesthetic) to grasp its form: its future course is determined by the spaces it has already demarcated. It is not surprising that jazz is so readily linked in representations to narration (the story of a life, of history, of culture).

The story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling of a movement. It *makes* it. (De Certeau 1984:81.)

Music, story, analysis: three means of demarcating space *and* three coextensive domains traversed by endless journeys that make meaning out of sonic, cultural, historical and existential noise.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. W. 1989–1990. On Jazz. *Discourse*, 12(1): 45–77.

Adorno, T. W. 1989. Perennial Fashion – Jazz, in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, edited by Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Keller. New York: Routledge: 199–209.

Alston, W. P. 1992. Literal and Nonliteral in Reports of Mystical Experience, in *Mysticism and Language*, edited by Steven T. Katz. New York: Oxford University Press: 80–102.

Attali, J. 1985. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, translated by Brian Massumi. Manchester: Manchester University Press. (Theory and History of Literature, Volume 16.)

Baker, D. 1938. *Young Man with a Horn*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Baldwin, J. 1990. Sonny's Blues, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*. New York: Penguin: 92–130.

Baraka, A. 1993. Now and Then, in *Moment's Notice: Jazz in Poetry and Prose*, edited by Art Lange and Nathaniel Mackey. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press: 166–171.

Barthes, R. 1977. *Image Music Text*, essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath. London: Fontana.

Barzun, J. 1996. Is Music Unspeakable? *The American Scholar*, Spring: 193–202.

Berendt, J. E. 1984. *The Jazz Book: Form New Orleans to Jazz Rock and Beyond*. London: Grafton.

- Berliner, P. F. 1994. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Benjamin, W. 1992. *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn. London: Fontana.
- Bhabha, H. K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Buber, M. 1996. *Ecstatic Confessions: The Heart of Mysticism*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Bloom, H. 1988. *Poetics of Influence*. New Haven, Conn.: Schwab.
- Cartier, X. W. 1990. *Be-bop Re-bop*. New York: Ballantine.
- Chambers, L. H. 1995. Improvising and Mythmaking in Eudora Welty's 'Powerhouse', in *Representing Jazz*, edited by Krin Gabbard. Durham: Duke University Press: 54-69.
- Chatwin, B. 1987. *The Songlines*. London: Pan.
- Collier, J. L. 1993. *Jazz: The American Theme Song*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coleridge, S. T. 1973. Kubla Kahn, in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, edited by Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling. London: Oxford University Press: 254-7.
- Corbett, J. 1994. *Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Connelly, F. S. 1995. *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

- Cooley, J. R. 1982. *Savages and Naturals: Black Portraits by White Writers in Modern American Literature*. East Brunswick: University of Delaware Press.
- Crow, B. 1990. *Jazz Anecdotes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cortázar, J. 1993. Louis, Super-Cronopio, in *Moment's Notice: Jazz in Poetry and Prose*, edited by Art Lange and Nathaniel Mackey. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press: 17-21.
- Davis, Miles (with Quincy Troupe). 1989. *Miles: The Autobiography*. London: Picador.
- De Certeau, M.. 1992. Mysticism. *Diacritics* 22(2):11-25.
- De Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven F. Randall. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. London: Athlone Press, 1983.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dentith, S. 1995. *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. 1998. *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Dumas, Henry. 1993. Will the Circle Be Unbroken?, in *Moment's Notice: Jazz in Poetry and Prose*, edited by Art Lange and Nathaniel Mackey. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press. 178-182.
- Dyer, G. 1991. *But Beautiful: A Book About Jazz*. London: Vintage.

Eliade, M.. 1963. *Myth and Reality*. New York: Allen and Unwin.

Ellison, R. 1995. *Shadow and Act*. New York: Vintage.

Ellison, R. 1965. *Invisible Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Engl, B. 1993. Loving It: Music and Criticism in Roland Barthes, in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, edited by Ruth A. Solie. Berkeley: University of California Press: 66-79.

Euripides. 1970. *The Bacchae*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Evans, A. 1988. *The God of Ecstasy: Sex-Roles and the Madness of Dionysus*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Everson, W. 1981. Dionysus and the Beat Generation and Four Letters on the Archetype, in *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, edited by Lee Bartlett. London: Jefferson: 181-194.

Feinstein, S. & Komunyakaa, Y. (eds.). 1991. *The Jazz Poetry Anthology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Feinstein, S. & Komunyakaa, Y. (eds.) 1996. *The Second Set: The Jazz Poetry Anthology: Volume 2*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

Fisher, R. 1990. Common Meter, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*, edited by Marcela Breton. New York: Penguin: 12-28.

Floyd, Samuel, A. 1995. *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Frith, S. 1996. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Gabbard, K. 1995. Signifyin(g) the Phallus: *Mo' Better Blues* and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet, in *Representing Jazz*, edited by Krin Gabbard. Durham: Duke University Press: 104–130.
- Garber, F. 1995. Fabulating Jazz, in *Representing Jazz*, edited by Krin Gabbard. Durham: Duke University Press: 70–103.
- Gardner, M. 1990. The Devil and the Trombone, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*, edited by Marcela Breton. New York: Penguin: 44–47.
- Gates, H. L. 1988. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gendron, B. 1989–1990. Jamming at Le Boeuf: Jazz and the Paris Avant-Garde. *Discourse* 12(1) Fall-Winter: 3–27.
- Giddins, G. 1981. *Riding on a Blue Note: Jazz and American Pop*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gioia, T. 1988. *The Imperfect Art: Reflections on Jazz and Modern Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goehr, L. 1995–6. The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance. *New Formations: Performance Matters*, 27(Winter): 1–22.
- Haar, M. 1988. Heidegger and the Nietzschean 'Physiology of Art', in *Exceedingly Nietzsche: Aspects of Contemporary Nietzsche-Interpretation*, edited by David Farrell Krell and David Wood. London: Routledge: 13–30.
- Hentoff, N. 1995. *Listen to the Stories: Nat Hentoff on Jazz and Country Music*. New York: Harper.

Hodgkinson, T. 1996. Siberian Shamanism and Improvised Music. *Contemporary Music Review (Music and Mysticism I)*, 14(1-2): 59-66.

Holmes, J. C. 1990. *The Horn*. London: Penguin.

Horowitz, I. L. 1982. On Seeing and Hearing Music: Nine Propositions in Search of an Explanation. *The Annual Review of Jazz Studies*, 1: 72-78.

Hughes, L. 1990. Dance, in *From Blues to Bop: A Collection of Jazz Fiction*, edited by Richard N. Albert. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press: 8-23.

Jarrett, J. M. 1988. Drifting on a Read: Jazz as a Model for Literary and Theoretical Writing. PhD. University of Florida, Florida.

Johnson, B. 1993. Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: The Problems of Jazz Discourse, *Popular Music* 12(1): 1-12.

Jones, E. M. 1994. *Dionysos Rising: The Birth of Cultural Revolution Out of the Spirit of Music*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Jones, LeRoi. 1963. *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. Westport: Greenwood Press

Joyce, J. 1992. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Katz, S. T. 1992. Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning, in *Language and Mysticism*, edited by Steven Katz. New York: Oxford University Press: 3-41.

Kerouac, J. 1992. *On the Road*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Kerouac, J. 1990. *Desolation Angles*. London: Grafton.

Kerouac, J. 1995. *The Subterraneans/Pic: Two Novels*. London: Flamingo.

Kivy, P. 1984. *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kofman, S. 1993. *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, translated by Duncan Large. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kristeva, J. 1980. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, edited by Leon S. Roudiez and translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kristeva, J. 1984. *Revolution in Poetic Language*, translated by Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kuhn, T. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Kundera, M. 1992. *The Joke*. London: Faber and Faber.

Leiris, M. *Manhood: A Journey from Childhood into the Fierce Order of Virility*, translated by Richard Howard. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Longley, M. 1985. *Poems 1963–1983*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Macann, C. 1993. *Four Phenomenological Philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty*. London: Routledge.

Mackey, N. 1986. *Bedouin Hornbook: From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*. Lexington: University of Kentucky.

- Mackey, N. 1995. From Noun to Verb, in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, edited by Krin Gabbard. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marsh, W. 1990. Mending Wall, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*, edited by Marcela Breton. New York: Penguin: 185–199.
- Martin, P. J. 1995. *Sounds and Society: Themes in the Sociology of Music*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Megill, A. 1985. *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*. London: University of California Press.
- Meltzer, David (ed.).1993. *Reading Jazz*. San Francisco: Mercury House.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge.
- Merod, J. 1992. Resistance to Theory: the Contradictions of Post-Cold war Criticism (With an Interlude on the Politics of Jazz), in *Critical Theory and Performance*, edited by Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 179–195.
- Morrison, T. 1992. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Morrison, T. 1992. *Jazz*. London: Picador.
- Nietzsche, F. 1956. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*. New York: Doubleday.
- Nietzsche, F. 1968. *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ondaatje, M. 1984. *Coming Through Slaughter*. London: Picador.

- Perlman, A. M. & Greenblatt, D. 1981. Miles Davis Meets Noam Chomsky: Some Observations on Jazz Improvisation and Language Structure, in *The Sign in Music and Literature*, edited by Wendy Steiner. Austin: University of Texas Press: 169–183.
- Petry, A. 1990. Solo on the Drums, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*, edited by Marcela Breton. New York: Penguin: 53–59.
- Phillips, S. H. 1992. Mystic Analogizing and the ‘Peculiarly Mystical’, in *Mysticism and Language*, edited by Steven T. Katz. New York: Oxford University Press: 123–142.
- Plato. 1966. *Plato’s Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Plato. 1970. *The Laws*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Preminger, A. 1965. *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Royle, N. 1996. *Saxophone Dreams*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Russell, R. 1994. *Bird Lives!*. London: Quartet.
- Said, E. 1991. *Musical Elaborations*. London: Vintage.
- Sallis, J. 1991. *Crossings: Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sallis, J. 1988. Dionysus - In Excess of Metaphysics, in *Exceedingly Nietzsche: Aspects of Contemporary Nietzsche-Interpretation*, edited by David Farrell Krell and David Wood. London: Routledge: 3–12.
- Schama, S. 1995. *Landscape and Memory*. London: Fontana.

Scherman, T. 1996. The Music of Democracy: Wynton Marsalis puts jazz in its place (interview). *Utne Reader*, March-April: 29–36.

Shelley, P. B. A Defence of Poetry, in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, edited by Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 744–761.

Sidran, B. 1995. *Black Talk: How the Music of Black America Created an Alternative to the Values of the Western Literary Tradition*. Edinburgh: Payback Press.

Simmons, H. 1996. *Man Walking on Eggshells*. Edinburgh: Payback Press.

Škvorecký, J. 1988. Red Music, in *Talkin' Moscow Blues*, edited by Sam Solecki. London: Faber and Faber: 83–97.

Škvorecký, J. 1994. *The Swell Season*, translated by Paul Wilson. London: Vintage.

Škvorecký, J. 1994. *The Cowards*. London: Faber and Faber.

Škvorecký, J. 1977. *The Bass Saxophone*, translated by Kaca Polackova-Henley. London: Pan.

Škvorecký, J. 1990. Eine Kleine Jazzmusik, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*, edited by Marcela Breton. New York: Penguin: 131–147

Sloterdijk, P. 1989. *Thinker on a Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Smith, C. 1995. A Sense of the Possible: Miles Davis and the Semiotics of Improvised Performance. *The Drama Review*, 39 (3): 41–52.

Sole, Kelwyn. 1988. Jazz. *Staffrider*, 7(3/4):271–273.

- Spencer, J. M. 1993. *Blues and Evil*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Staten, H. 1990. *Nietzsche's Voice*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Stauth, G. & Turner, B. S. 1988. *Nietzsche's Dance: Resentment, Reciprocity and Resistance in Social Life*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Storr, A. 1992 *Music and the Mind*. London: HarperCollins.
- Sudnow, D. 1993. *Ways of the Hand: The Organization of Improvised Conduct*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Szwed, J. F. 1980. Josef Škvorecký and the Tradition of Jazz Literature. *World Literature Today*, 54(4): 586-590.
- Tomlinson, G. 1992. Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies, in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canons*, edited by Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman. Chicago: Chicago University Press: 64-94.
- Torgovnick, M. 1990. *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Tucker, M. 1996. The Body Electric: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Music. *Contemporary Music Review (Music and Mysticism I)*, 14(1-2): 59-66.
- Wall, Anthony. 1990. Words with a Memory. *Critical Studies*, 2(1/ 2): 46-63.
- Wain, J. 1962. *Strike the Father Dead*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Welty, E. 1990. Powerhouse, in *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*, edited by Marcela Breton. New York: Penguin: 29-43.

Whitman, W. 1995. The Mystic Trumpeter, in *Leaves of Grass*. New York: Prometheus Books: 356–358.

Woodward, P. S. 1992. Abraham Maslow, in *On the Nature of Musical Experience*, edited by Bennet Reimer and Jeffrey E. Wright. Niwot: University of Colorado Press: 105–110.